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Evaluation of the Family Reunification Program

Evaluation Division

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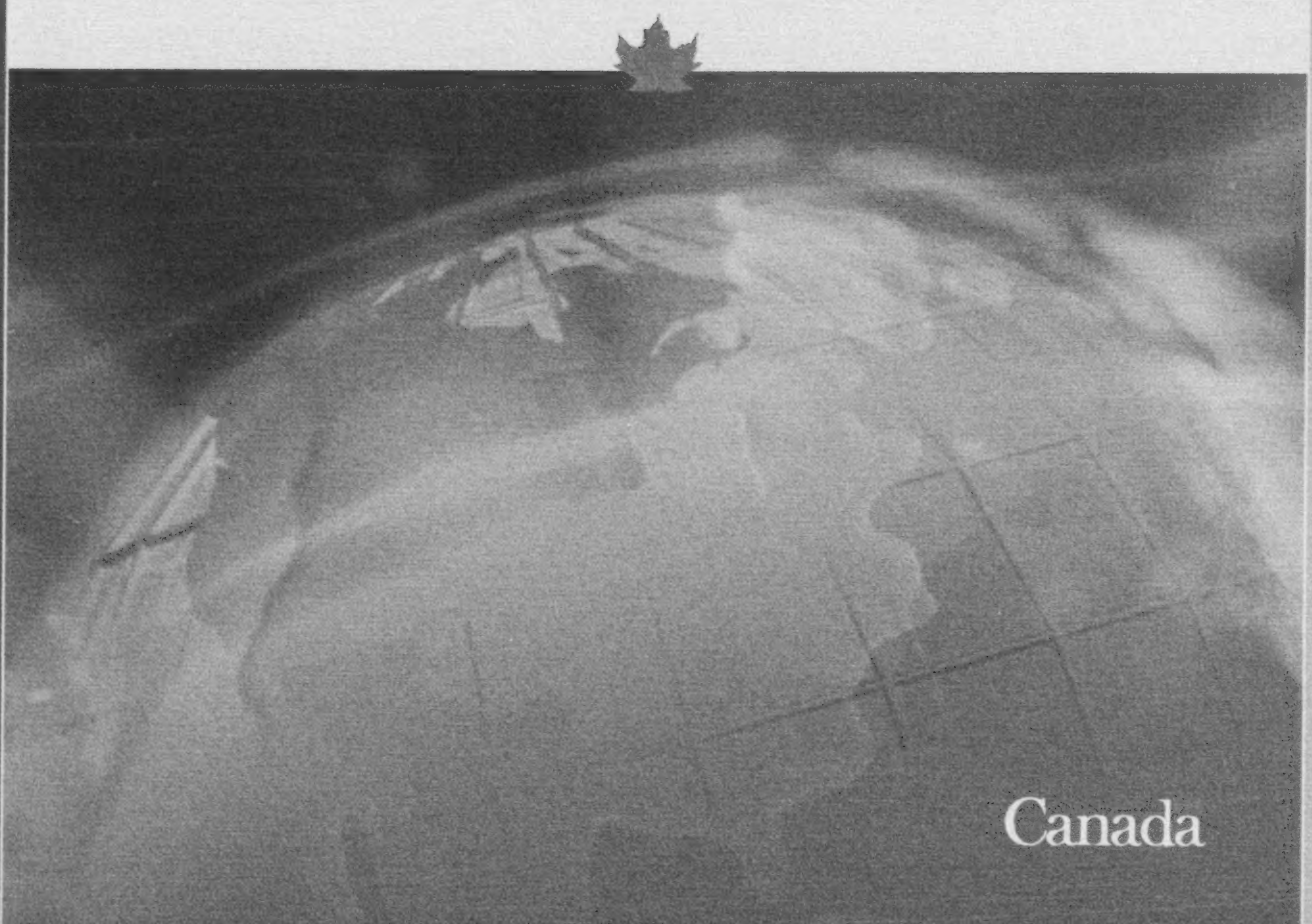

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Technical appendices are available upon request to Research-Recherche@cic.gc.ca

List of acronyms

BCL	Litigation Management
CAIPS	Computer Assisted Immigration Processing System
CBO	Canada-based Officer
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CPC	Case Processing Centre
CPR	Central Processing Region
CVOA	Canadian Visa Offices Abroad
DOJ	Department of Justice
DLSU	Departmental Legal Services Unit
DPR	Departmental Performance Report
FC	Family Class
FOSS	Field Operations Support System
FRP	Family Reunification Program
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GCMS	Global Case Management System
IAD	Immigration Appeal Division
IMDB	Longitudinal Immigrant Database
IRPA	*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*
LES	Locally Engaged Staff
MoC	Marriages of Convenience
NHQ	CIC National Headquarters
OB	Operations Bulletin
OGDs	Other Government Departments
OMC	Operational Management and Coordination
PAA	Program Alignment Architecture
PGP	Parents and Grandparents
PR	Permanent Resident
RPP	Report on Plans and Priorities
PT	Provincial/Territorial
S&P	Spouse/Partner
TD	Temporary Duty
TRV	Temporary Resident Visa

Executive summary

Purpose of the Evaluation

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the Family Reunification Program (FRP) that was carried out from December 2012 to September 2013. The evaluation was conducted in fulfillment of requirements under the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) *Policy on Evaluation*.

The Family Reunification Program

Family reunification is one of the three pillars of CIC's immigration program. Canadian immigration policy and legislation have a long tradition of supporting family reunification, which permits both recent immigrants and long-established Canadians to be reunited with members of their family. Under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR)*, family living abroad may be sponsored as well as spouses or common-law partners living in Canada with their sponsor. Persons who can be sponsored in the family class include the spouse, common-law partner (including same-sex partner), conjugal partner, dependent children, parents, grand-parents, children adopted from abroad, and other relatives in special circumstances.

The Regulations reflect Canada's commitment to family reunification while recognizing that this must be done with an accountability of the sponsor to honour their obligations in the care and maintenance of new immigrants. Family class immigration involves the assessment of the sponsor and assessment of the principal applicant and their dependents. Sponsors must demonstrate that they have the ability to support the persons they sponsor for a period of between three and ten years depending on the age and relationship of the person sponsored. This unconditional promise of support comes in the form of an "undertaking" with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration (in Québec this undertaking is signed with the provincial authorities).

Methodology

The scope of the evaluation covered the period from 2007 to 2011. The evaluation was designed to address two broad themes: relevance and performance of the FRP. The evaluation included seven lines of evidence, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, drawing from both primary and secondary data sources:

- Document Review
- Administrative data review
- Key Informant Interviews
- Survey of Sponsors
- Case Studies comprised of:
  - Site visits to several overseas visa offices
  - Site visits to several inland processing and local CIC offices
  - Site visit to the CIC Call Centre
- Survey of overseas visa offices
- Focus groups with sponsored relatives

Limitations

Although the evaluation contained a balance of qualitative and quantitative lines of evidence, there were four notable limitations that should be considered when reading this report:

- Due to changes in financial coding within the department, it was not possible to report on budgeted and actual spending specific to the FRP.
- Given the self-selected nature of the sponsor survey and the response rate of 30%, there is potential for non-response bias.
- There were some gaps in CIC's administrative data, and in the comparability of the data maintained by the IAD and CBSA.
- Focus group respondents were not selected at random so the findings they generated cannot be taken as representative of all sponsored relatives.

Mitigation strategies were used to address the limitations. These strategies, along with the triangulation of multiple lines of evidence, were considered sufficient to ensure evaluation findings can be used with confidence.

Evaluation findings

The main findings associated with each of the evaluation questions are presented below.

Program relevance

- There is a continuing demand for the Family Reunification Program in all categories. While there was unanimous support for the reunification of spouses, partners and dependent children, stakeholders were more divided about the need for the parents and grandparents component.
- The Family Reunification Program is well-aligned with CIC priorities and, while the Government of Canada has more recently emphasized the economic benefits that derive from immigration, the Family Reunification Program remains a key pillar of Canada's approach to immigration.
- The role of the federal government in the delivery of the FRP is appropriate.

Program performance

Management Outcomes

- Overall, management of the FRP is effective, although some issues were identified with respect to communications and coordination, both within the CIC network and between CIC and CBSA.
- CIC has introduced a variety of strategies, such as GCMS and centralized processing, that allow the FRP to be more responsive to changing operational conditions. However, the ability to shift workload between offices has also introduced some issues related to monitoring and managing office targets, and having sufficient local knowledge to identify problematic applications.

Information and communication

- Clients in the FRP are using CIC information sources and, overall, are satisfied with these tools and services.
- Sponsors and principal applicants generally have a good understanding of the application process and requirements, although some challenges exist.

Application processing

- There are a variety of training opportunities, tools, and sources of functional guidance available to CIC staff which are generally sufficient and of high quality. However, training and guidance are not always delivered in a timely manner, and CIC key informants felt more training and updates could be beneficial in certain areas.
- Decision-making in the FRP is defensible and generally consistent and supported by training, tools and functional guidance.
- Appeals at the Immigration Appeal Division and judicial review cannot be linked to the defensibility of visa officer decision-making due to insufficient data and the use of different types of information by Immigration Appeal Division members compared to visa officers.
- The service standards for FCP processing are not being met and the processing times for all FC categories increased from 2007-2011; moreover, a variety of challenges exist to ensuring timeliness of decision-making in the FRP.

Program integrity

- Attempted fraud and program misuse are perceived as being high, particularly in the spouse and partner category; however, available data is insufficient to assess the true nature and extent of fraud overall.
- There are a variety of program integrity measures to combat fraud and these are used effectively by immigration officers; however, key informants reported that lack of resources limits their use.
- CIC informants identified a variety of issues that they believe can negatively impact program integrity.
- Data show that the consistency between visa officer and IAD decisions may be improving as the proportion of visa officer decisions that have been overturned by the IAD has been steadily decreasing over time.

Final Outcomes

- The Family Reunification Program has been successful at landing sponsored relatives and family members are remaining in close proximity to their sponsors once in Canada.
- Close to 7 in 10 sponsored spouses and partners are reporting employment earnings in each of their first 8 years in Canada and they fare better economically than spouses of economic immigrants, with the exception of higher rates of employment insurance usage.
- Economic outcomes of parents and grandparents are well below the average of all immigrants, with fewer than half reporting employment income, low average earnings and increased employment insurance usage over time.

- A high proportion of Other Family Class immigrants report employment income; however, they have the lowest earnings and the largest increase in EI usage over time in Canada. This is likely due to the young average age of these immigrants.
- Family class immigrants have a disproportionately high rate of reporting social assistance when compared to all immigrants, which can be attributed primarily to parents and grandparents.
- Some Family Class immigrants are accessing social assistance during the period of undertaking, although data suggest that more recently selected Family Class immigrants use social assistance less often than earlier cohorts.
- The sponsorship undertaking is somewhat effective at controlling use of social assistance for parents and grandparents, while spouses and partners' use of social assistance appears to be influenced by other factors.
- The total undue costs to provinces are unknown as sponsorship debt is not tracked consistently across provinces. The undue costs of sponsorship default for BC and ON are a relatively small percentage of overall social assistance costs to the provinces and have been lower in recent years as fewer sponsors are in default and some of the costs are being recovered.
- There are considerable social, cultural and other economic benefits of sponsorship to sponsor families.

Efficiency and economy

- Family Reunification Program costs are high when compared to economic programs, but have generally decreased over the evaluation period.
- Budget allocations for the Family Reunification Program will decrease over the next few years, while planned FC levels targets are growing and will include a higher proportion of parent and grandparent applications, which have been increasingly costly to process.
- New program tools and initiatives have been received positively by CIC staff, for the most part, and are expected to lead to greater program efficiencies; however, there is not yet sufficient evidence to demonstrate this impact.
- Complex files and negative decisions take longer to process, and the program had a higher number of these types of files over the period of the evaluation, compared to the previous five-year period.
- While almost half of cases streamed through Alternate Dispute Resolution are resolved, the remainder continue to a full appeal hearing, which may affect the efficiency of file processing by lengthening overall processing times for these cases.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is a continuing need for the Family Reunification Program and the role of the federal government in its delivery is appropriate. The FRP is well aligned with CIC priorities and is a key pillar in the Government of Canada's approach to immigration.

CIC continues to receive significant numbers of applications from Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor their eligible family members under all three categories of the Family Class (spouses and partners, parents and grandparents, and other FC) demonstrating continuing demand and ongoing relevance for the Family Reunification Program. Key informant interviews and public consultations showed that the strongest perceived need exists for the FC Priority categories, which includes spouses and partners (S&P) and dependent children. The role of the federal government in the delivery of the FRP is appropriate.

The Family Reunification Program is well-aligned with CIC priorities and, while the Government of Canada has more recently emphasized the economic benefits that derive from immigration, the Family Reunification Program remains a key pillar of Canada's approach to immigration.

The FRP has been successful at reuniting families and there are considerable benefits to sponsor families resulting from this reunification.

The sponsor survey showed that almost all sponsored relatives lived with their sponsor in the same home upon landing and a large majority were still living with their sponsor after five years in Canada. The FRP has been successful at reuniting families as they continue to live in close geographic proximity as a family unit.

There are significant benefits which sponsored family members may contribute to their sponsor, their families and to Canada. Survey results showed that a large majority of S&Ps and some PGPs contribute to household income both directly, through working full or part-time themselves, and indirectly by enabling their sponsor to work additional hours. Sponsored S&Ps and PGPs also volunteer in the community and provide other social and cultural benefits by helping children learn about their cultural heritage, providing emotional support for their family and by enabling their sponsor to settle in Canada. Most PGPs also benefit the sponsor family through the provision of child care.

Although it is not an economic immigration program, Family Class immigrants have positive economic outcomes, with the exception of parents and grandparents whose economic outcomes are below the all immigrant average.

The Family Reunification Program is not designed to produce economic benefits but it is expected to limit undue costs to the general public. That said, spouses and partners are faring quite well economically, with close to 7 in 10 reporting employment earnings in each of their first 8 years in Canada, and compare favourably to spouses of economic immigrants. Immigrants in the Other FC category also show positive economic outcomes considering their young average age. Economic outcomes of PGPs, however, are below the average of all immigrants, with fewer than half reporting employment income, low average earnings, and increased EI usage over time.

While there are some undue costs related to the use of social assistance, this can be attributed primarily to PGPs. There is evidence to demonstrate that the sponsorship undertaking has a containment effect on the use of SA by PGPs, and that the total amount of sponsorship debt has decreased in recent years.

The PGP population is largely responsible for the disproportionately high rate of FC immigrants reporting social assistance as compared to all immigrants, and reliance on social assistance is more common among PGPs the older the age at landing. However, the undertaking that is signed by PGP sponsors was shown to have an important containment effect on the use of social assistance by PGPs, with reliance on social assistance spiking following the termination of the undertaking.

A comparison of the period of the evaluation (2007-2011) with the previous five-year period (2002-2006) demonstrated a reduction in the total costs associated with sponsorship default. More recently selected immigrants are less likely to rely on social assistance than their counterparts who landed in earlier years. This finding, together with the active enforcement and debt recovery programs implemented in some provinces, has resulted in a reduction in the total amount of unpaid sponsorship debt over the last few years.

Decision-making in the FRP appears to be consistent and defensible, and is supported through training, tools, functional guidance and quality assurance on FRP files. However, given the many recent and on-going changes to Program processes, it is important to ensure that this program management support continues to be timely and up-to-date.

According to key stakeholders and the results of a network-wide QA exercise, decisions made on Family Class applications are defensible (i.e., well documented) and generally consistent between different officers. Despite this, improvements could be made through additional quality assurance exercises and further standardization of procedures and training. Specific issues with training and functional guidance were identified to further improve the consistency and defensibility of decision-making.

Recommendation #1: In light of many recent and anticipated changes to the Program, CIC should standardize a training schedule, including refresher training and more formalized GCMS training for those involved in application processing, including CBSA hearings officers.

Program clients, overall, have a good understanding of sponsorship requirements and the application process. However, clients also identified a need for information on the ongoing status of their application.

Information services provided to clients (e.g., application forms, guidance documents, etc.) are clear and helpful and as a result, sponsors and principal applicants generally have a good understanding of application procedures and requirements. Some clients may face continuing difficulty with the complexity and language level of application and information packages. Though information is available in a variety of formats on application processes and requirements prior to filing an application, there is a gap in client-identified information available to FC clients who have already applied and wish to have up-to-date and detailed information about the ongoing status of their submitted application.

Management of the program is effective and responsive, although issues were identified with regard to communication and coordination primarily between visa offices and inland offices, and between CIC and external partners. A lack of performance information related to program integrity is also an issue for ongoing management of the Program.

The effectiveness of communications varies across the CIC network and between Program partners. Improvements to communication and collaboration between overseas and inland offices, such as identifying a designated contact person and enhancing the timeliness of responses to inquiries, are needed. Communication between CIC and CBSA is hindered by lack on an integrated computer system and different departmental priorities. As well, visa officers would benefit from a better understanding of the appeal process at the IAD, including the types of information that are used in their decision-making process. Better coordination and communication with provinces and territories is also needed in terms of delivering the adoptions program, which was identified as being especially complex given its multi-jurisdictional nature.

A further issue compounding communication and coordination efforts is the fact that roles and responsibilities are not always clear between various CIC offices, and between CIC and CBSA. These issues may be amplified by the lack of dedicated governance mechanisms for the Program.

In light of the many Program changes that have taken place in recent years:

Recommendation #2: CIC should clarify, consolidate and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the various offices that have a role in the delivery of the FRP.

Recommendation #3: CIC should develop a strategy to improve communication and coordination between different offices across the CIC network and with external partners in order to share Program information effectively.

There were a number of limitations identified in the availability of FRP data. For example, there is no centralized data captured by CIC on the incidence of suspected fraud, or active and standardized tracking of the types of fraud seen at various CIC missions. Data on appeals at the IAD and on judicial reviews of FC cases at the Federal Court are not sufficiently comprehensive to inform the Program's operation. As well, CBSA data shared with CIC does not capture FRP-specific information. FRP policies and procedures were found to be evidence-based to the extent that information is available; however, necessary information is lacking in some key areas related to fraud within the FRP, among others. As well, the full extent of undue costs to provinces is unknown, given that sponsorship debt is not tracked consistently across provinces (particularly among those without an information-sharing agreement with CIC). These examples taken together highlight a gap in performance measurement data.

Recommendation #4: CIC should develop and implement a performance measurement strategy (PMS) for the FRP and generate the data needed to assess the program integrity. This should include discussions with partner agencies, departments and provincial/territorial governments to ensure necessary Program data is captured for use in ongoing program performance measurement, monitoring and reporting. The PMS should also include a plan to monitor the impact of CIC's Modernization initiatives (e.g., workload distribution, processing efficiency) , in alignment with CIC's Modernization performance measurement and evaluation frameworks.

The FRP, like all CIC programs, strives to maximize both efficiency and program integrity. The fact that planned budget allocations for the FRP are decreasing while planned admissions for FC are increasing may challenge CIC's ability to deliver the Program within established processing standards while also addressing program integrity issues.

The service standards for FCP processing are not being met and the processing times for all FC categories increased over the period covered by the evaluation although it is expected that new tools and initiatives implemented in the FRP will eventually help increase the efficiency of program delivery.

A common perception exists among CIC staff in Canada and overseas, as well as among Program partners that fraud and program misuse are high in the FRP, particularly in the S&P category. There are currently a variety of program integrity measures which are used effectively by visa officers; however, these measures require additional resources and time, and therefore may impact negatively on the cost or timeliness of file processing. Key CIC informants reported that a lack of resources is the primary barrier to identifying fraudulent FC cases. Some informants feel that CIC may not be identifying some instances of fraud in the Program and over 70% of visa offices held that the trade-off between the efficiency of file processing and program integrity is problematic for FC processing in their office at least to some extent.

In terms of resource utilization, the department currently has plans to decrease the budget allocation for the FRP and to increase FC levels targets over the next few years. In order to reduce the PGP backlog, a higher number of PGP applications will need to be processed. The unit cost to process these applications has increased annually since 2006-07. These factors, i.e., an increasing workload and decreasing resources, together with concerns regarding program integrity and the inability of CIC to meet its current processing time service standards, create an untenable situation and an opportunity for CIC to realign its resources and FRP commitments.

Recommendation #5: CIC should conduct a risk-based assessment of pressures currently facing the FRP opportunities for process streamlining and re-engineering in order to determine how resources can best be aligned to achieve the program's objectives and priorities, including ensuring program integrity, reducing backlogs and meeting established service standards.

Evaluation of the Family Reunification Program - Management Response Action Plan (MRAP)

Recommendation	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation date
Recommendation #1: In light of many recent and anticipated changes to the Program, CIC should standardize a training schedule, including refresher training and more formalized GCMS training for those involved in application processing, including CBSA hearings officers.	CIC is committed to ensuring staff involved in application processing are provided with the necessary training to perform their jobs. CIC cannot commit to providing training to CBSA hearings officers, as this falls outside of its mandate. CBSA officers at ports-of-entry currently use FOSS. The Agency will be moving towards use of GCMS in the future, aligned with CIC's de-commissioning of FOSS. Use of the system by CBSA is being phased in gradually, with successive GCMS Releases, with an initial focus on port-of-entry as opposed to hearings officers.	OMC will liaise with CIC Learning & Development Branch, as well as International Region (training) and conduct a review of existing Training Programs to identify gaps and assess the potential for updating training material to include policy and operational changes. OMC will liaise with GCMS to discuss how to better promote closer attention to GCMS release notes - and timely reminders - by staff. Where available, a link to the relevant GCMS instructions will be included in operational manuals whenever they are updated.	OMC, Learning & Development	Q1 2014/15 Q2 2014/15
Recommendation #2: In light of the many Program changes that have taken place in recent years, CIC should clarify, consolidate and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the various offices that have a role in the delivery of the FRP.	As part of CIC's Modernization of Manuals project, OMC has updated Operational Manual IP 8 (Spouse and Common-law partner in Canada Class), which will be available online shortly, and will review and update IP 2 (Processing Applications to Sponsor Members of the Family Class) and OP2 (Processing Members of the Family Class), to ensure that staff have access to the most up to date information. This will include an outline of the specific roles and responsibilities at CPCs, inland offices and visa offices, as well as those of internal or external partners, in the processing of applications under the family class (or public policy specific to family reunification).	OMC will work with Communications Branch to coordinate Manual Updates aligned with the objectives of the Modernization of Manuals project. All CIC manuals will be updated to include new web features making it fast and easy to update. Work on updating IP 2 is underway, with work on OP 2 to commence by early 2014.	OMC Communications	Q2 2014/15
Recommendation #3: In light of the many Program changes that have taken place in recent years, CIC should develop a strategy to improve	CIC is committed to continuous, innovative and adaptable operational improvement across an integrated service delivery network and strengthening external partnerships.	To strengthen engagement, OMC will continue to establish working groups or committees to better coordinate and benefit from structured discussions, examine the feasibility of a case conferencing mechanism, and improve connections responsive to	OMC Communications	Q1 2014/15

Recommendation	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation date
communication and coordination between different offices across the CIC network and with external partners in order to share Program information effectively.	Recent re-organization of the domestic network affected CIC's capacity to optimally address operational changes that impact on the Regions. OMC is working to optimize linkages with the Regions through working groups, committees, regular Operations Sector calls and consultation with designated Regional Directors	the outcomes of Quality Assurance exercises. Ongoing improvements to the CIC website and the Manuals Project will ensure that internal and external partners have access to easy-to-understand, up-to-date, and streamlined program information. OMC will liaise with internal partners to better promote points of contact within CIC and/or with external partners to strengthen communication and coordination across the CIC network to more effectively share program information. In support of greater transparency, OMC will consult with Communications and Human Resources Branch to determine if there are any plans to upgrade CIC Org Charts/ Directories so they are more comprehensive, identify all Divisions/Units/Teams/staff and are updated more frequently and consistently.		
Recommendation #4: CIC should develop and implement a performance measurement strategy (PMS) for the FRP and generate the data needed to assess program integrity. This should include discussions with partner agencies, departments and provincial/territorial governments to ensure necessary Program data is captured for use in ongoing program performance measurement, monitoring and reporting. The PMS should also include a plan to monitor the impact of CIC's Modernization initiatives (e.g., workload distribution, processing efficiency), in alignment with CIC's Modernization performance measurement and evaluation frameworks.	CIC agrees with the recommendation and will develop, for implementation, a Performance Measurement Strategy for the FRP, including a plan to collect data that can support analysis of program performance and monitoring and reporting of program outcomes.	IB will lead the development of a performance measurement strategy that will include a performance matrix and a data integrity plan, supported by R&E, OMC and OPMB. CIC will include in the PMS a strategy to collect data on program outcomes, including the outcomes of decisions appealed at the Immigration and Refugee Board, as well as data regarding fraud, misuse and sponsorship defaults. As part of the development and implementation of the revised PMS, the department will explore viable options to systematically collect relevant data on FRP applicants, such as their education/occupation, and their socio-economic outcomes, to further improve the program's alignment with the GoC priority of facilitating the integration of newcomers.	Immigration Branch Supported by: R&E OMC OPMB	Q4 2014/15

Recommendation	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation date
Recommendation #5: CIC should conduct a risk-based assessment of pressures currently facing the FRP and opportunities for process streamlining and re-engineering in order to determine how resources can best be aligned to achieve the program's objectives and priorities, including ensuring program integrity, reducing backlogs and meeting established service standards.	CIC acknowledges that there are significant challenges involved in strengthening program integrity, while at the same time improving processing efficiency and client service. Recent initiatives - some of which have been implemented subsequent to the evaluation review period - are expected to address pressures in meeting FRP volumes, service standards, and program integrity goals. CIC will continue assessing program integrity risks in the FRP and has implemented triage criteria for processing of PGP applications. Additionally, the department is exploring new initiatives for communicating the level of performance that clients can expect to be provided for CIC services, including FRP applications. Initiatives arising from CIC's Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification are expected to address volume pressures in the longer-term and support improved overall alignment between commitments and resources	OMC will prepare a report outlining work undertaken since this evaluation that will address these issues, including identifying any gaps and opportunities for further work. OMC will work with OPMB and IB to develop a plan for conducting a risk-based assessment of FRP operational pressures and identify opportunities for streamlining processes to ensure service standards are met.	OMC Supported by: OPMB and IB	Q4 2014/15 Q4 2014/15

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Evaluation

This report presents the results of the evaluation of Citizenship and Immigration's (CIC) Family Reunification Program (FRP) that was carried out from December 2012 to September 2013. The evaluation was conducted in fulfillment of requirements under the Treasury Board Secretariat's (TBS) *Policy on Evaluation* and covers the period from 2007 to 2011. Historical data prior to 2007, as well as more recent program data were used, where appropriate, in order to assess wider trends within the Program.

The report is organized into four main sections:

- Section 1 includes the purpose of the evaluation and an overview of the Program, including a client profile;
- Section 2 summarizes the methodology and discusses the strengths, limitations, and mitigation strategies of the study;
- Section 3 presents the findings, organized by evaluation issue; and
- Section 4 presents the conclusions and recommendations.

The report also includes a supplemental document containing Technical Appendices that are referenced throughout the report.

1.2. Program profile

1.2.1. Program objectives

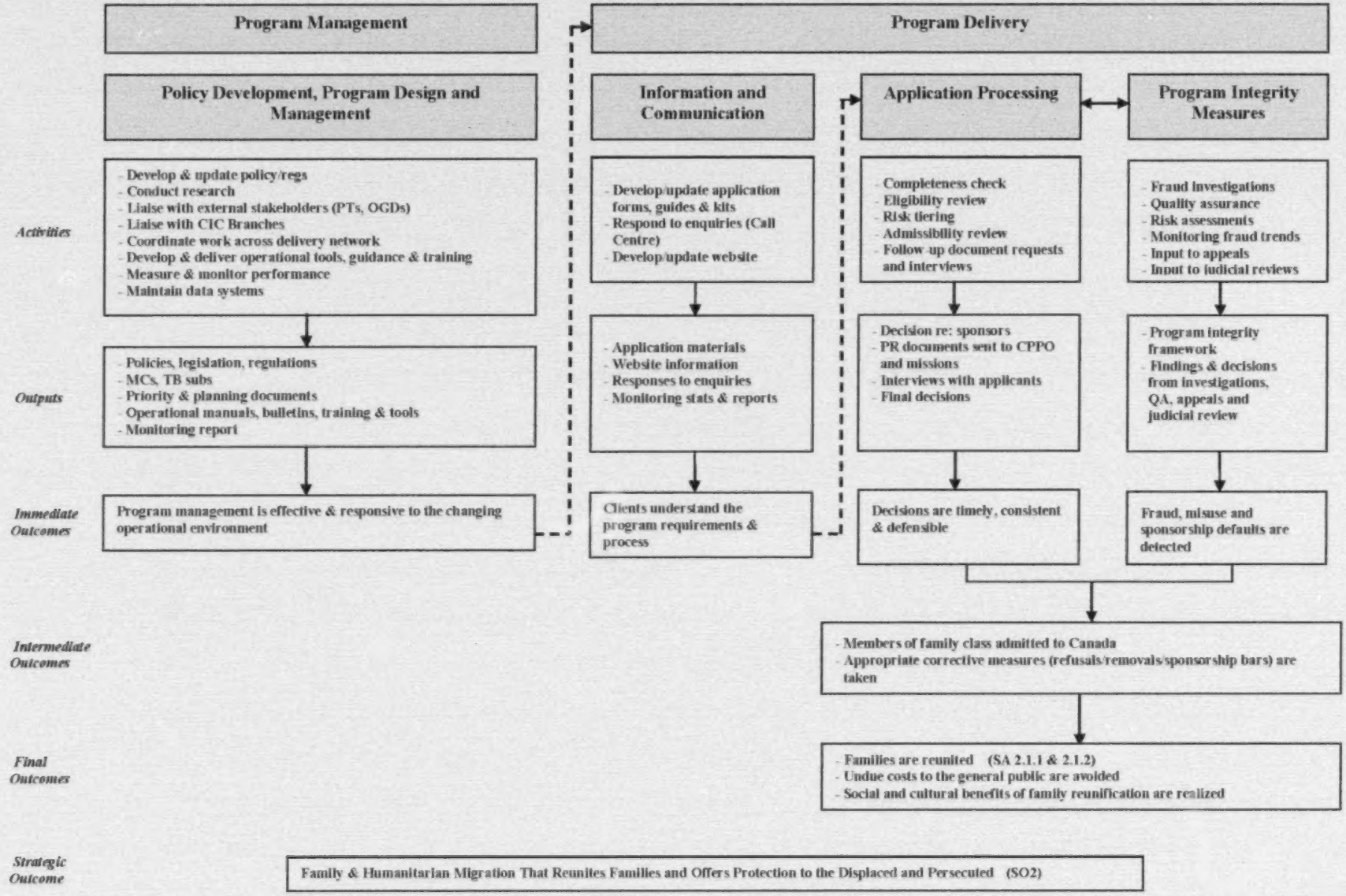
Although Canada has had provisions for admitting immigrants with relatives since 1908, family reunion did not emerge as a distinct class until 1926, and was not incorporated in legislation until the *Immigration Act of 1976*. The objective of the family class, as articulated in the 1976 Act, was to facilitate the reunion in Canada of Canadian citizens and permanent residents with their close relatives from abroad.[1] Today, reuniting family members continues to be enshrined as one of the fundamental principles and objectives of Canadian immigration policy and legislation. Beyond family reunification, the FRP is also expected to produce social and cultural benefits, without incurring undue costs to the Canadian public (see FRP logic model, 2012).

1.2.2. Eligibility criteria

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) and the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* (IRPR) represent the legal framework which governs the eligibility of sponsors and sponsored members of their family. Section 12(1) of IRPA outlines members of the Family Class, while Section 13(1) outlines the sponsorship provision, permitting Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor members of the family class such as a spouse, common-law partner, child, parent, or "other prescribed family member" (e.g. conjugal partners, grandparents, adopted children, etc.), who are further listed under the IRPR (R117).

[1] Deshaw, Rell. *The History of Family Reunification in Canada and Current Policy*. Canadian Issues, Spring 2006, 9-14.

Family Reunification Program—Logic model


Program Management
Program Delivery
Policy Development, Program Design and Management
Information and Communication
Application Processing
Program Integrity Measures
Activities
- Develop & update policy/regs
- Conduct research
- Liaise with external stakeholders (PTs, OGDs)
- Liaise with CIC Branches
- Coordinate work across delivery network
- Develop & deliver operational tools, guidance & training
- Measure & monitor performance
- Maintain data systems
- Develop/update application forms, guides & kits
- Respond to enquiries (Call Centre)
- Develop/update website
- Completeness check
- Eligibility review
- Risk tiering
- Admissibility review
- Follow-up document requests and interviews
- Fraud investigations
- Quality assurance
- Risk assessments
- Monitoring fraud trends
- Input to appeals
- Input to judicial reviews
Outputs
- Policies, legislation, regulations
- MCs, TB subs
- Priority & planning documents
- Operational manuals, bulletins, training & tools
- Monitoring report
- Application materials
- Website information
- Responses to enquiries
- Monitoring stats & reports
- Decision re: sponsors
- PR documents sent to CPPO and missions
- Interviews with applicants
- Final decisions
- Program integrity framework
- Findings & decisions from investigations, QA, appeals and judicial review
Immediate Outcomes
Program management is effective & responsive to the changing operational environment
Clients understand the program requirements & process
Decisions are timely, consistent & defensible
Fraud, misuse and sponsorship defaults are detected
Intermediate Outcomes
- Members of family class admitted to Canada
- Appropriate corrective measures (refusals/removals/sponsorship bars) are taken
Final Outcomes
- Families are reunited (SA 2.1.1 & 2.1.2)
- Undue costs to the general public are avoided
- Social and cultural benefits of family reunification are realized
Strategic Outcome
Family & Humanitarian Migration That Reunites Families and Offers Protection to the Displaced and Persecuted (SO2)

There are two broad categories of family class sponsorship:

1. Sponsorship of overseas family members (R117), including:
   - a spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner;
   - dependent children (including adopted children);[2]
   - parents or grandparents;
   - children under 18, to be adopted in Canada;
   - orphaned family members under 18 who are not a spouse or common-law partner, and who are a sibling, nephew/niece, or grandchild; or
   - any other relative by blood or adoption, regardless of age, provided the sponsor does not have a spouse, common-law partner, conjugal partner, parent, grandparent, sibling, niece, nephew, aunt or uncle who is already in Canada as a citizen or permanent resident or who they could otherwise sponsor.
2. The IRPR (R124) also allows for sponsorship of in-Canada spouses and common-law partners who currently reside with their sponsor in Canada and who held legal status as a temporary resident upon entry to Canada.

To be eligible to sponsor under either category of the Program, a person must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, at least 18 years of age and reside in Canada. Canadian citizens who reside outside Canada may only sponsor spouses, partners and dependent children if they will reside in Canada as a sponsor when their relative becomes a permanent resident.

In order to be assessed, all prospective sponsors are required to submit a joint application, including an application to sponsor, sponsorship agreement and undertaking signed by the sponsor and the sponsored family member, who simultaneously submits a signed application for permanent residence. The sponsorship agreement and undertaking represent the sponsor's legal agreement to financially support the sponsored person and their family member and repay any social assistance granted to the sponsored person during a period of three to ten years, depending on the type of familial relationship.[3] Should the sponsored person receive social assistance during the period of the undertaking, the sponsor is considered to be in default of their agreement and the sponsor must pay back the funds received by the sponsored person to the respective province. Sponsors are prevented from sponsoring another relative until such funds are repaid in full.

Sponsors are also assessed to determine whether they have the minimum necessary income (MNI) that is required to meet their financial obligations. However, sponsors of spouses, partners or dependent children are exempted from this prerequisite in the eligibility criteria, under the

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[2] A son or daughter is dependent when the child is under the age of 22 and does not have a spouses or common-law partner; or over 22, is a full time student, and is dependent on the sponsor since before 22; became a spouse or a common-law partner before 22 and has been enrolled as a full-time student on an ongoing basis and is dependent on the financial support of a parent since they became a spouse or common-law partner; or is over age 22 and has depended largely on the financial support of a parent since before age 22 because of a physical or mental condition.
[3] Undertakings for spouses, partners and their dependent children (including adopted children) over 22 are for 3 years from the date of becoming a permanent resident. For dependent (including adopted) children under 22, applying as a principal applicant the undertaking lasts for a maximum of 10 years or until the child becomes 25 years of age, whichever comes first. Undertakings for all other FC streams including parents, grandparents, dependent children of sponsor's parents or grandparents and orphaned and other relatives are for 10 years.

IRPR R133(4), though they must still agree to ensure that those they sponsor receive basic necessities such as food, clothing and health care.

Spouses, partners and dependent children have also been designated within CIC as FC Priority (FCP) classes. As such, CIC has made it an operational policy to expedite the processing of these types of applications.[4] Spouses, partners, and dependent children also face fewer barriers to sponsorship: for instance, they are not denied entrance to Canada on the basis that they would be an excessive demand on Canada's health and social services.[5]

1.2.3. Roles and responsibilities

Federal/provincial responsibilities

The responsibility for immigration is shared between the federal and Provincial/Territorial (PT) governments. Under this framework, the federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over "naturalization and aliens," which enables federal authorities to assess the eligibility and admissibility of family class applicants.

The *Canada-Quebec Accord* grants Quebec the responsibility to administer sponsorship undertakings and to set the financial criteria for sponsors whose applicants are destined to Quebec, while the federal government (CIC) retains the responsibility to assess all other eligibility and admissibility components.

In addition, as a signatory of the *Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption*, all Canadian provinces and territories have passed various legislation and established procedures which protect the rights and welfare of adopted children. In cases of adoption, provincial/territorial authorities generally provide letters attesting to the legal nature of the adoption and sponsors must undergo a home study, which is conducted by a government officer or government licensed agency, depending on the province or territory.

PTs also play a role in the administration of social assistance granted within their province to sponsored family members. As such, the federal government has signed three information sharing memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, which allow these provinces to better identify and track defaulting sponsors.[6]

CIC roles and responsibilities

CIC plans, manages, and delivers all aspects of the Family Reunification Program, with the exception of the sponsorship undertaking for residents of Quebec. Governance of the Program within CIC is distributed across various branches, with responsibility for the management and delivery of different activities residing with individual divisions.

- The Immigration Branch at CIC is responsible for providing evidence-based policy development, and connecting strategic policy with program policy and design.

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[4] The departmental service standard for these cases is to process 80% of cases within 12 months. However, this standard applies only to overseas S&P applications. In the case of in-Canada S&P, the families are presumed to be currently united, which reduces the need for faster processing.

[5] All prospective immigrants to Canada are required to undergo medical examinations. These examinations are intended to detect any health conditions which may affect the health of the Canadian public, or which may result in excessive demands being placed upon the Canadian health care system.

[6] CIC is working with the Canada Revenue Agency to develop a federal collection mechanism in which all provinces will be invited to participate.

- The Operations Sector of CIC is responsible for coordinating the department's program delivery activities. Within this sector:
  - The Operational Management and Coordination (OMC) Branch is responsible for providing operational instructions and guidance related to the Program to the field, and overseeing quality assurance and anti-fraud activities.
  - The Litigation Management Unit (BCL) under Case Management Branch is the primary unit responsible for monitoring and managing developments in the area of Family Class litigation at CIC and for providing case-specific operational instructions and guidance related to the Program to the field.
  - The Centralized Processing Region (CPR) at NHQ is responsible for inland program coordination and liaising with other branches regarding policy and operational design of the FRP. Outside of NHQ:
    - Case Processing Centre - Mississauga (CPC-M) is responsible for receiving sponsorship applications and assessing sponsors' eligibility prior to forwarding applications for permanent residence to the appropriate visa office.
    - CPC Vegreville (CPC-V) processes spousal or common-law partner in-Canada applications. Unlike CPC-M, CPC-V assesses both the sponsor and principal applicant on these applications.
    - Case Processing Pilot Ottawa (CPPO) assesses low-risk PGP files which have been streamed through CPC-M.
    - The CIC Call Centre provides basic information in response to telephone inquiries.
  - The International Region (IR) Branch in NHQ is responsible for operational and policy coordination of the overseas component of the FRP. Outside of NHQ, visa offices abroad assess and make decisions on applications for permanent residence from family class applicants residing overseas, as well as assess and make decisions on overseas dependents included in applications of spouses and common-law partners in Canada.
  - Local CIC offices in various Canadian regions are responsible for investigating criminal eligibility issues of Family Class (FC) applicants living in Canada and determining applicants' eligibility once investigations are complete.

Roles and responsibilities of other government departments and stakeholders

Outside CIC, the main partners involved with the Program include the Immigration Appeal Division (IAD) of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) of Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), and the Federal Court of Canada.

- The IAD hears and decides appeals on refused family class applications from outside Canada.
- CBSA hearings officers represent CIC and act as Minister's Counsel during alternative dispute resolution (ADR) meetings and appeal hearings at the IAD. CBSA officers are also involved with investigating potential cases of fraud and conducting removals of people who are deemed inadmissible to Canada.[7] As well, CBSA's international network, consisting of

[7] CIC is responsible for all level 1 investigations, also known as desk investigations or administrative reviews. A level 1 investigation includes database and system checks, open-source research, a review of the physical file, and may also include an interview. The CBSA is responsible for all level 2 investigations, also known as field investigations. A level 2 investigation may include house visits and other activities that are broader in scope than a level 1 or administrative review.

Liaison Officers (LOs) stationed at key visa offices abroad, help CIC officers to identify high-risk applicants and advise on their admissibility, and conduct local investigations on suspected fraud within the Program and report on their findings to CIC.

- The Federal Court hears and decides federal legal disputes including challenges to the decisions of federal tribunals such as the IAD. At the Federal Court, family class cases, along with other types of immigration matters, are dealt with as Applications for Judicial Review (JR).

1.2.4. Program governance

The Family Reunification Program is one of several immigration streams within CIC and there is no specific governance mechanism dedicated solely to the Program. Major policy and operational decisions within the FRP are made at various levels. Several corporate decision-making bodies meet regularly to handle not only issues related to family reunification, but also matters that cut across all of CIC's Strategic Outcomes and related Program Activities of the PAA. Decision-making in the Family Reunification Program is also made at committees such as CIC's Policy Committee, Management Accountability Committee (MAC) and Business Operations Committee (BOC).

1.2.5. Program resources

From fiscal year 2007-08 to 2010-11, the budget for the Family Reunification Program (FRP) was included in the total budget for CIC's Immigration Program (IP), as resource reporting was aligned with CIC's Program Alignment Architecture (PAA). Table 1-1 shows program spending for all Programs within the IP (a breakdown for FRP is not available). As well, although additional funding was put towards processing larger numbers of PGP applications in some of these years[8], these resources are also included in the overall funding amounts and a specific breakdown on these amounts was not available.

Table 1-1: Program spending 2007-2008 to 2010-2011*

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
$208.6 M	$219.2 M	$157.5 M	$143.0 M

**Financial figures account for the entire Immigration Program, of which FRP is only a part.*
Source: Departmental Performance Reports 2007-08 to 2010-11

Following a change to the PAA, beginning in 2011-12, the FRP was paired with Discretionary Immigration Programs. In that year, the total budget was $61M; however, that amount includes the Humanitarian and Compassionate, and public policy streams, along with the Family Reunification Program. Program costs are discussed in detail in the Resource Utilization section of the report (section 3.7.1).

[8] Due to the way finances were reported in these years, it was not possible to show the amounts of additional funding over specific time periods.

Table 1-2: Program spending 2011-2012*

2011-12
$45.1

**Financial figures account for both family reunification and discretionary immigration, which includes H&C and public policy decisions.*
Source: Departmental Performance Report 2011-2012

1.3. Client profile

There are a number of different client groups within the Family Reunification Program, including sponsors and, for the purposes of this evaluation, three categories of sponsored relatives: Spouses and Partners (S&P); Parents and Grandparents (PGP); and Children and Other Family Class.[9] This section of the report presents the number of sponsorships and the number of FC applications and landings (in persons) over the 11 year period from 2002 to 2012. A variety of general demographic information (gender, age, level of education, and country of birth/last permanent residence) is then presented for each of the four client groups.[10]

Sponsorships

Table 1-3 provides data on the number of sponsorships[11] between 2002 and 2012. The trend for the S&P category shows an increase between 2002 and 2006, then an annual decrease until 2011 and an increase again in 2012. The pattern for PGPs varies from this but, unlike S&Ps, it is not related to demand; rather, the numbers processed are based on levels and priorities.[12] Similarly, it isn't possible to assess trends over time in the number of sponsorships under the Children and Other FC group. In this case, it is because of the introduction of Citizenship Grant adoptions (under Bill C-14) in December 2007. This Bill created a new adoptions stream, which was no longer captured in the Family Class data, as these applications are submitted for citizenship rather than for permanent residence. Consequently, the numbers since 2007 represent a different population, than during the previous years (see Table 1-4 for Citizenship Grant landing data).

[9] CIC typically reports on four categories of sponsored relatives: Spouses and Partners; Parents and Grandparents; Sons and Daughters; and Other Family Class. However, because the Other Family Class category is very small, it has been combined with Sons and Daughters (also a comparatively small group), and called *Children and Other Family Class* for the purposes of this evaluation.

[10] Although the evaluation timeframe was 2007-2011, the decision was made to use a longer period of time, from 2002-2011, in order to identify any longitudinal trends in the numbers of sponsorships, applications and landings; 2012 was later added to provide the most current information where available. The socio-demographic client information covers only those clients for whom the sponsored relative landed in Canada between 2007 and 2011, the period being evaluated.

[11] "Sponsorships" represents the number of applications to sponsor a relative, where the relative has successfully landed in Canada.

[12] For example, PGP application processing was suspended between May 2004 and September 2005 in order to focus on processing spouses, partners and dependants. In November, 2011, the PGP Program was again paused as part of the Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification, which aimed to reduce the backlog of PGP applications.

Table 1-3: Trends in number of sponsorships, 2002-2012

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Spouses and partners	29,506	33,943	38,381	39,784	39,547	39,858	39,707	39,269	36,451	34,249	35,317
Children and other	5,033	5,411	4,973	5,206	4,913	5,273	4,567	3,979	4,004	3,736	3,523
Parents and grandparents	11,439	9,916	6,704	5,715	9,566	7,978	8,482	8,987	8,213	7,466	11,746
Family Class (Total)	**45,978**	**49,270**	**50,058**	**50,705**	**54,026**	**53,109**	**52,756**	**52,235**	**48,668**	**45,451**	**50,586**

Source: CIC, RDM, sponsorship database 2012-Q4

Family Class applications

As indicated in Table 1-4, between 2007 and 2011, the overall number of FC applications (in persons) gradually decreased from 112,068 in 2007 to 81,446 in 2011 - an overall reduction of 27%.[13] However, applications in this 5-year period surpassed the overall number of applications received in the Family Class in the previous five-year period (2002-2006) by almost 94,000 applications, largely due to the high number of PGP applications received between 2007 and 2009.[14]

Table 1-4: Trends in number of applications received (in persons) and landed immigrants, 2002-2012

Category	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Spouses & Partners											
Received	50,820	51,873	54,655	57,025	61,945	63,558	60,839	58,002	54,697	64,448	57,770
Landed	34,197	39,681	44,227	45,457	45,304	44,912	44,208	43,904	40,763	38,536	39,533
Children & Other Family Class											
Received	9,866	7,347	7,035	7,394	7,624	8,874	7,182	6,294	6,513	6,778	5,298
Landed	5,850	6,056	5,315	5,441	5,207	5,517	4,773	4,125	4,134	3,834	3,660
Citizenship grants							2,326	1,835	1,628	1,193	1,160
Parents and Grandparents											
Received	33,482	24,765	8,690	5,165	19,038	39,636	55,957	38,898	18,634	10,220	5,695
Landed	22,246	19,385	12,733	12,475	20,005	15,813	16,600	17,178	15,326	14,080	21,815
Family Class (Total)											
Received	94,168	83,985	70,380	69,584	88,607	112,068	123,978	103,194	79,844	81,446	68,763
Landed	62,293	65,122	62,275	63,373	70,516	66,242	65,581	65,207	60,223	56,450	65,008
Share of the family class	**27.2%**	**29.4%**	**26.4%**	**24.2%**	**28.0%**	**28.0%**	**26.5%**	**25.9%**	**21.5%**	**22.7%**	**25.2%**

**N.B: very few PGP applications were received in 2004-2005 and 2011-12, as a result of a temporary pause on applications and file storage*

Source: Report from IR stats, file: PR-RP-post-eng; and RDM admin data

This trend is mirrored in the S&P category where the number of applications increased annually between 2002 and 2007, but then decreased each year, until 2011, when there was a spike in the number received. This does not appear to reflect a trend in increasing demand, as the number received in 2012 is 10% lower than the preceding year.

[13] This report makes reference to the number of applications in terms of the persons and in cases. In terms of a person count, each principle applicant and accompanying family member within an application is counted separately. In terms of cases, each application, regardless of the number of people attached to the application, is counted as a single unit.

[14] During the pause on PGP applications in 2004-05, CPC-M stored PGP applications and did not enter them into their system as "received" until they were ready to be processed at a later date (sometimes a year or more later). This served to artificially inflate the number of PGP applications received between 2007 and 2009.

Regarding the remaining two categories, both the Children and Other FC and the PGP categories also showed decreases in the number of applications received/processed (see footnote 15) between 2007 and 2011. However, as noted, both the implementation of the Citizenship Grant and the temporary pauses on PGP applications will have had an impact on applications in these categories and no conclusions can be drawn regarding trends.

Landings

With respect to the number of permanent residents admitted in Family Class, the overall pattern for the last ten years (see Table 1-4) has been a gradual increase in landings between 2002 and 2006 followed by small annual decreases until 2011; the 2012 numbers suggest that the number of FC landings is again increasing, although the majority of this increase can be attributed to the current priority given to processing PGP applications as part of the Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification.

Levels

The number of landings in the Family Class is influenced somewhat by CIC's Annual Levels Plan, which is tabled in Parliament each year. This plan articulates CIC's planned immigration levels (total number of permanent residents that Canada aims to admit each year) and levels mix (how the total number should be distributed among the immigration categories, including economic, family, refugee and humanitarian classes). Table 1-5 shows the planned ranges in each year for spouses, partners and children[15], and PGPs.

The overall Family Class planning ranges increased from 2007 to 2008/2009 then decreased in 2010 and increased again in 2011. The planning range for PGPs is higher in 2012 than in any previous year, as a result of CIC's Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification, which aims to reduce the backlog of PGP applications. The range for S&P was dropped in 2012 to its lowest level in 7 years.

Table 1-5: Levels plan of the Family Reunification Program, 2007-2013

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Spouses, partners and children	49,000–50,000	50,000–52,000	50,000–52,000	42,000–45,000	45,500–48,000	38,000–44,000	42,00–48,500
Parents and grandparents	18,000–19,000	18,000–19,000	18,000–19,000	15,000–18,000	13,000–17,500	21,000–25,000	21,800–25,000
Family Class Overall	**67,000–69,000**	**68,000–71,000**	**68,000–71,000**	**57,000–63,000**	**58,500–65,500**	**59,800–69,000**	**63,800–73,500**

Source: CIC, Report on Plans and Priorities

[15] In the Annual Levels Plan, levels targets are organized by PAA sub-activity and, therefore, Children and Other FC are included with spouses and partners.

Sponsor demographics

As indicated in Table 1-6, the sponsors of Family Class immigrants who landed between 2007 and 2011 were more often male than female, although their relative percentage decreased slightly over this timeframe. However, this was reversed for the Parents and Grandparents category, where women comprised a larger percentage of sponsors (see Table A-1 in the Technical Appendices).

Table 1-6: Sponsors' demographics by landing year of their sponsored relative, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Gender					
Females	39.2%	40.3%	41.2%	41.7%	42.0%
Males	60.0%	58.9%	57.9%	57.0%	57.0%
Not Stated	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	1.2%	1.0%
Age groups					
18 to 24 years of age	12.9%	12.7%	11.8%	10.5%	10.0%
25 to 44 years of age	71.6%	71.5%	72.2%	72.3%	73.3%
45 to 64 years of age	13.8%	14.0%	14.1%	14.9%	14.7%
65 years of age and more	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	1.1%
Not stated	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%	1.2%	0.9%
Immigration status					
Family class	25.2%	24.5%	25.6%	25.5%	23.8%
Economic immigrants - p.a.	21.4%	21.3%	21.6%	21.5%	21.8%
Economic immigrants - s.d.	10.3%	10.9%	11.2%	11.2%	12.1%
Refugees	13.0%	12.5%	12.1%	11.8%	12.1%
Other immigrants	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	2.3%	2.2%
Unknown	4.7%	4.4%	4.0%	3.8%	3.7%
Born abroad total	76.3%	75.2%	76.3%	76.1%	75.7%
Born in Canada	22.8%	23.8%	22.7%	22.6%	23.3%
Unknown	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.3%	1.0%

Source: CIC, Sponsorship database 2012-Q2

With respect to age at the time of sponsorship, almost three out of four sponsors were between 25 and 44 years old. Sponsors of S&Ps and PGPs had an average age of 34 over the five year period, whereas sponsors of Other FC, at an average of 41 years old, were a bit older.

Because approximately 75% of sponsors are immigrants, Table 1-6 includes a summary of their original immigration status. The largest group of sponsors (one-third of all sponsors) came to Canada as economic immigrants, and an additional 25% arrived as members of the Family Class. Not surprisingly, the original immigration status varied significantly for the different types of sponsored relatives (see detailed technical appendices) because almost all Canadian-born sponsors are sponsoring Spouses and Partners, while 99% of the sponsors of PGPs are immigrants, with 48% originating from the economic immigrant category and 42% from Family Class.

Table 1-7: Sponsors' country of birth by landing year of their sponsored relative, 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
India	14.3%	14.0%	15.0%	14.5%	12.9%
China, People's Republic of	10.4%	8.9%	9.3%	8.4%	9.9%
Not Stated	9.1%	10.2%	9.6%	9.2%	8.2%
Philippines	5.1%	5.0%	5.1%	5.9%	6.1%
Pakistan	3.9%	4.6%	3.8%	2.3%	3.5%
Vietnam, Socialist Republic of	3.3%	2.2%	2.3%	2.0%	1.6%
Sri Lanka	2.2%	2.1%	2.3%	2.2%	2.4%
Iran	2.1%	2.1%	2.7%	1.8%	1.6%
Jamaica	1.7%	1.6%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%
Haiti	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	2.9%	2.4%
Other countries	23.3%	23.7%	23.4%	24.9%	25.3%
Born abroad Total	76.3%	75.2%	76.3%	76.1%	75.7%
Born in Canada	22.8%	23.8%	22.7%	22.6%	23.3%
Unknown	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.3%	1.0%

Source: CIC, Sponsorship database 2012-Q2

As shown in Table 1-7, for sponsors born abroad, the two main source countries between 2007 and 2011 were India and China, which together comprised almost a quarter of all sponsors in each year under study. This finding varied for the sponsors of Other FC, who came primarily from China (12%), Philippines (10%), and Jamaica (6%); (see Table A-2 in the Technical Appendices).

Spouse and partner demographics

The demographic data for spouses and partners are presented in Tables 1-8 and 1-9. The spouses and partners landing in Canada between 2007 and 2011 were mostly comprised of principal applicants on their own (only one out of ten arrived with dependants). Similarly, like sponsors, the majority of S&Ps were between 25 and 44 years of age at arrival, with an average of 31 years of age for principal applicants (see Table A-3 in the Technical Appendices). Between 2007 and 2011, the age at landing increased slightly. Sponsors were also more often male (see Table 1-6), with the larger percentage of sponsored spouses being female.

With respect to level of education, over a quarter of S&Ps had a bachelor's degree and another 6-8% had a graduate degree[16]. At the other end of the spectrum, close to 20% had less than 10 years of schooling and an additional 20% had 10-12 years of schooling.

The largest percentage of spouses and partners are coming to Canada from India and China, although close to 10% identify the United States as their country of last permanent residence (See Table 1-9)

[16] Due to data issues, some level of education data is not available for 2011 (see Table 1-8).

Table 1-8: Spouses and partners' demographics, landing years 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Family status					
Principal applicants	88.5%	89.7%	89.0%	89.1%	88.7%
Dependants	11.5%	10.3%	11.0%	10.9%	11.3%
Gender					
Females	62.0%	61.1%	59.9%	59.6%	59.1%
Males	37.9%	38.9%	40.1%	40.4%	40.9%
Age groups					
0 to 14 years of age	7.7%	7.2%	7.2%	7.5%	7.8%
15 to 24 years of age	24.5%	23.1%	22.4%	20.3%	18.9%
25 to 44 years of age	60.3%	62.2%	62.5%	64.1%	64.8%
45 to 64 years of age	6.9%	6.9%	7.3%	7.5%	8.0%
65 years of age or more	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Level of education					
0 to 9 years of schooling	18.2%	16.6%	17.3%	18.3%	--*
10 to 12 years of schooling	19.8%	19.1%	19.1%	18.4%	13.7%
13 or more years of schooling	9.4%	8.9%	8.9%	8.8%	6.2%
Trade certificate	6.4%	6.7%	6.9%	7.0%	5.4%
Non-university diploma	12.5%	13.0%	12.4%	12.2%	10.1%
Bachelor's degree	25.8%	26.8%	26.8%	27.0%	--*
Master's degree	6.9%	7.9%	7.7%	7.4%	5.9%
Doctorate	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.7%

** Due to some problems during operational adjustments to CIC's administrative data files, the numbers for these years are missing.*

Source: CIC, RDM, 2012-Q2

Table 1-9: S/Ps' country of last permanent residence, landing years 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
India	12.9%	12.3%	13.7%	13.4%	10.7%
China, People's Republic of	13.8%	10.5%	10.8%	9.0%	10.1%
United States of America	7.7%	9.2%	8.9%	8.7%	8.7%
Philippines	5.6%	5.8%	5.8%	7.0%	7.3%
Pakistan	4.8%	5.5%	5.0%	2.9%	3.9%
United Kingdom and Colonies	3.3%	3.5%	3.6%	3.7%	4.0%
Vietnam, Socialist Republic of	3.5%	2.4%	2.6%	2.1%	1.5%
Morocco	1.7%	2.0%	2.2%	2.6%	2.4%
Jamaica	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%	2.4%
Mexico	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	2.4%	2.2%
Other countries	43.6%	45.6%	44.2%	46.3%	46.9%

Source: CIC, RDM, 2012-Q2

Parents and Grandparents demographics

The socio-demographic profile of the PGP category was substantially different from that of S&P with respect to: family composition, where almost half of the immigrants accepted in this category were dependants (children of the PGP); in age, with the largest proportion of immigrants in this category being between the ages of 45 and 64, and 11%-16% being dependent children under 25 years of age; and education, with about 60% of the members of this group having 12 or fewer years of schooling (See Table 1-10).

Table 1-10: Parents' and Grandparents' demographics, landing years 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Family status					
Principal applicants	50.7%	51.3%	52.5%	53.9%	53.2%
Dependants	49.3%	48.7%	47.5%	46.1%	46.8%
Gender					
Females	56.8%	57.1%	57.5%	58.4%	57.4%
Males	43.2%	42.9%	42.5%	41.6%	42.6%
Age groups					
0 to 14 years of age	1.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%
15 to 24 years of age	15.4%	14.1%	12.2%	10.7%	10.1%
25 to 44 years of age	4.5%	5.0%	5.3%	6.4%	6.1%
45 to 64 years of age	48.4%	47.3%	47.2%	45.3%	42.0%
65 years of age or more	30.8%	32.8%	34.5%	36.9%	41.1%
Level of education					
0 to 9 years of schooling	39.5%	37.3%	35.3%	37.5%	40.1%
10 to 12 years of schooling	22.2%	21.1%	21.8%	19.9%	18.1%
13 or more years of schooling	8.2%	7.3%	7.5%	7.5%	7.3%
Trade certificate	4.1%	4.8%	4.2%	4.7%	5.1%
Non-university diploma	6.3%	7.1%	7.4%	6.8%	5.8%
Bachelor's degree	15.2%	17.0%	18.8%	18.7%	18.8%
Master's degree	3.7%	4.5%	4.0%	4.0%	4.1%
Doctorate	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	0.8%

Source: CIC, RDM, 2012-Q2

As presented in Table 1-11, half of all parents and grandparents originate from two source countries: India (more than 30% in each year under review); and China (which comprised 13-20% of sponsored parents and grandparents during this period.

Table 1-11: PGP country of last permanent residence, landing years 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
India	35.8%	35.8%	33.5%	31.1%	31.3%
China, People's Republic of	15.1%	13.3%	15.5%	15.5%	19.8%
Philippines	6.1%	4.7%	5.9%	6.6%	6.9%
Sri Lanka	3.8%	3.4%	3.2%	5.3%	4.4%
Iran	4.0%	3.6%	5.8%	2.0%	2.2%
Pakistan	4.4%	5.6%	2.2%	0.9%	3.9%
Haiti	0.3%	0.4%	0.7%	4.2%	6.0%
Vietnam, Socialist Republic of	2.6%	1.1%	1.7%	1.9%	2.4%
Romania	0.8%	3.0%	1.6%	2.7%	1.0%
Russia	1.2%	1.6%	2.0%	1.1%	1.4%
Other countries	25.9%	27.6%	27.9%	28.7%	20.5%

Source: CIC, RDM, 2012-Q2

Other FC demographics

As shown in Table 1-12, almost all the immigrants admitted in this category are 24 years of age and under and approximately three-quarters have less than 10 years of schooling. A higher number of Other FC immigrants are males than females, but the difference is negligible.

The primary source countries for this group differed from the other categories in the Family Class. Although China was the largest source country in each year, its percentage of the total group diminished substantially, from 22% in 2007, to 12% in 2011. The second most common country of last permanent residence is the Philippines, which consistently comprised around 10% of the annual total population. India came only in the 6th position with around 4% of the share.

Table 1-12: Children and Other FCs' demographics, landing years 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Family status					
Principal applicants	95.9%	95.8%	96.3%	96.6%	97.3%
Dependants	4.1%	4.2%	3.7%	3.4%	2.7%
Gender					
Females	53.2%	49.8%	49.6%	48.8%	47.8%
Males	46.8%	50.2%	50.4%	51.2%	52.2%
Age groups					
0 to 14 years of age	62.7%	59.5%	59.2%	54.7%	55.2%
15 to 24 years of age	34.2%	37.9%	38.3%	42.2%	41.7%
25 to 44 years of age	2.6%	2.1%	2.0%	2.6%	2.7%
45 to 64 years of age	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%
65 years of age or more	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Level of education					
0 to 9 years of schooling	73.3%	70.1%	70.6%	67.8%	76.8%
10 to 12 years of schooling	14.9%	16.3%	17.1%	17.9%	13.6%
13 or more years of schooling	5.5%	6.2%	5.5%	5.7%	4.8%
Trade certificate	2.9%	3.2%	3.1%	4.3%	1.8%
Non-university diploma	1.5%	2.2%	1.5%	2.2%	1.2%
Bachelor's degree	1.7%	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	1.6%
Master's degree	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Doctorate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: CIC, RDM, 2012-Q2

Table 1-13: Other FCs' country of last permanent residence, landing years 2007-2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
China, People's Republic of	21.5%	14.7%	13.2%	12.6%	11.8%
Philippines	10.1%	10.8%	9.3%	9.5%	10.3%
Jamaica	6.1%	6.4%	9.9%	8.4%	6.2%
United States of America	7.1%	8.2%	8.6%	6.4%	6.0%
Haiti	3.1%	4.1%	4.2%	10.4%	6.5%
India	4.2%	3.8%	4.3%	4.0%	4.4%
Ethiopia	3.5%	4.0%	3.2%	2.7%	3.9%
Russia	2.6%	2.4%	2.2%	1.7%	2.2%
Pakistan	1.9%	2.7%	2.2%	2.1%	2.2%
Ghana	1.6%	1.9%	1.9%	2.4%	1.9%
Other countries	38.3%	41.0%	41.0%	39.7%	44.7%

Source: CIC, RDM, 2012-Q2

2. Methodology

2.1. Evaluation approach, issues and questions

In keeping with the requirements of the *Directive on the Evaluation Function* (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2009), the evaluation was designed to examine two broad issues: the relevance and performance of the Family Reunification Program.

A program logic approach was used in the design of the evaluation, supported by a detailed evaluation matrix. The logic model depicts the activities, expected outputs, and expected outcomes for the Family Reunification Program. The expected outcomes addressed in the evaluation were:

- Program management is effective and responsive to the changing operational environment.
- Clients understand the program requirements and process.
- Decisions are timely, consistent and defensible.
- Fraud, misuse and sponsorship defaults are detected.
- Members of the Family Class admitted to Canada.
- Appropriate corrective measures (refusals/removals/sponsorship bars) are taken.
- Families are reunited.
- Undue costs to the general public are avoided.
- Social and cultural benefits of family reunification are realized.

The evaluation design was calibrated in accordance with the overall risk of the Program. Due to the high relative materiality of the Program, the importance of ensuring program integrity (which is a priority of CIC), recent changes to the policy framework, and no previous evaluation of the FRP having been completed, a comprehensive evaluation using multiple lines of evidence and an in-depth analysis of issues relating to all categories of the FRP was required. A list of evaluation questions is presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Evaluation questions

Evaluation issue	Evaluation question
Program relevance	1. Is there a continued need for a Family Reunification Program (FRP) in Canada? Is there a continued need for the spouses and partners and dependent children component (S&P). Is there a continued need for the parents and grandparents component (PGP)? 2. Is the federal government role in the delivery of the Family Reunification Program appropriate? 3. Is the Family Reunification Program aligned with CIC and Government of Canada priorities?
Program performance - management outcomes	4. Is the management of the Program effective and responsive to the changing operational environment?
Program performance - program outcomes	5. To what extent do Program clients understand the sponsorship requirements and application process? 6. Are application decisions timely, consistent and defensible?

Evaluation issue	Evaluation question
	7. How effective are the program integrity measures currently in place?
	8. To what extent are eligible families being reunited in Canada?
	9. Are there undue costs to the general public as a result of the program?
	10. What social, cultural or other benefits result from family reunification?
Program performance - efficiency and economy	11. What is the cost of the program? Are there alternative, more cost-effective approaches to achieve the intended results?
	12. Have the new tools and initiatives (e.g., one-step submission, pause on PGP applications, GCMS) improved the efficiency of the Program?

2.2. Evaluation scope

The evaluation was designed to cover all FC categories, as described previously in the Program Profile (section 1.2) and identified in CIC's Program Alignment Architecture (PAA), specifically Sub-Programs (SP) 2.1.1 - Spouses, Partners and Children Reunification, and 2.1.2 - Parents and Grandparents Reunification[17].

The evaluation focussed on program activities and expected outcomes, as identified in the logic model, over a five year period, from January 2007 to December 2011. However, historical data prior to 2007, as well as more recent program data were used in order to assess wider trends within the Program, where appropriate[18]. The FRP has recently undergone several operational and regulatory changes, which lie outside the timeframe of the evaluation; however, efforts were made to assess some of the preliminary impacts and results of these changes and to determine the perceptions of key program stakeholders regarding these new tools, policies, procedures, and regulations.

Sponsorship cases within the province of Quebec were included within the sponsor survey and in the analysis of administrative data; however, the evaluation does not report on the elements of the Family Reunification Program specific to Quebec, individually (i.e., the sponsorship undertaking and financial criteria).

2.3. Data collection methods

The evaluation included multiple lines of evidence, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, drawing from both primary and secondary data sources (data collection instruments are presented in technical appendices, available under separate cover). Each of the data collection methodologies is described in more detail, below.

2.3.1. Document review

A review of relevant program documents was conducted in order to provide information for most of the evaluation questions. Key documents included:

Corporate / accountability documents: including CIC's Departmental Performance Reports (DPR), Reports on Plans and Priorities (RPP), CIC's current Strategic Plan (2013),

[17] In the PAA, Other FC is captured under SP 2.1.1 – Spouses, Partners and Children Reunification.

[18] Where 2012 data was available, it was included in the evaluation in order to provide information on the Program's more recent context.

and other documentation that provided information on CIC and Government of Canada priorities.

Legislative documents: including the IRPA, IRPR, constitutional documents, and relevant international declarations and conventions.

Program-specific documents: including processing manuals, federal-provincial MoUs, application kits, promotional materials, operation bulletins (OBs), background documents, operational reports and directives, process maps, appeals documents, and budgets/financial documents, and other documents available on the CIC intranet/internet site.

Research and academic literature: including Public Opinion Research (POR), academic research, and documentation on other family-based immigration programs.

A bibliography of documents is provided in the Technical Appendices.

2.3.2. Administrative data review

Administrative data from a number of systems, as well as from CIC financial accounting records, was reviewed and analyzed to assess program relevance and performance, and to develop the profile of FRP clients. The primary sources of administrative data were:

- The Global Case Management System (GCMS) - an integrated case management system that covers the entire continuum of client information from first contact to final disposition and replaced CAIPS and FOSS through a phased implementation that took place between 2010 and 2012;
- The Computer-Assisted Immigration Processing System (CAIPS) - a CIC system that contains data on immigrant applications that were processed by overseas offices;
- The Field Operations Support System (FOSS) – a CIC system that contains landing data on immigrants entering Canada;
- The Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB) – a database that is managed by Statistics Canada on behalf of a federal-provincial consortium led by CIC. This database links landings records to Canada Revenue Agency tax files (mainly T1 data). It is a tax filer database that contains information on all landed immigrants in Canada since 1980 who have filed at least one tax return;
- CIC Sponsorship Database – this database, developed by CIC's Research and Evaluation Branch, links immigration information of sponsors with their sponsored relatives.

Other sources of administrative data included official reports produced by CIC on a regular basis such as operational data from the Book of Basics (BOB) and landings reports from CIC's Facts and Figures.

In terms of addressing questions regarding the cost and economy of the Program, the evaluation used financial data obtained from departmental financial systems, the yearly figures from CIC's Cost Management Model (CMM) exercise and various reports that detail budget allocations for the Program. Additionally, data was obtained from Program partners, including appeals data from the IAD and information on sponsorship default from some provinces.

2.3.3. Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were used to gather in-depth, qualitative information on all of the evaluation questions, covering areas of program relevance and performance (see Technical appendices for the interview guides). A total of 133 interviews involving 170 key informants were conducted either in-person or via telephone, (Table 2-2).[19] The list of interviewees was developed in consultation with the policy and program areas of CIC.

Table 2-2: Summary of interviews

Interview group	Number of interviews	Number of interviewees
CIC Representatives		
National Headquarters		
CIC senior managers	4	5
CIC program staff	18	25
Inland Case Studies		
CPCs/CPPO	30	31
Call Centre managers/staff	5	5
Local CIC managers/staff	9	11
Overseas Case Studies		
CVOA managers/staff	41	52
Provincial Representatives		
Provincial representatives (default)	6	9
Provincial adoption specialists	3	4
OGDs and Organisations		
CBSA officials	5	16
IAD officials	1	5
Adoption specialist (IAS)	1	1
Non-government representatives		
Immigration Representatives	9	9
NGO	1	1
TOTAL	**133**	**170**

Where interview information is used in the report, it is presented using the scale shown in Table 2-3.

[19] Interviews involving multiple informants were treated as one response.

Table 2-3: Scale for the presentation of interview results

All	Findings reflect the views and opinions of 100% of the interviewees.
Majority/Most	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 100% of interviewees.
Many	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of interviewees.
Some	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of interviewees.
A few	Findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of interviewees.

2.3.4. Survey of sponsors

A survey of sponsors was conducted between January and March of 2013 in order to gather client perceptions regarding the FRP application process, the benefits and other impacts of the Program to them and their family, their views on information products and services, as well as their level of understanding concerning the Program. A final draft of the survey was pretested with a group of sponsors living in the National Capital Region. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in the technical appendices.

Because the FRP includes three main categories of sponsored relatives and the sponsors for each of these categories were expected to vary in their responses, a stratified random sample was used. The total population for the survey was 242,455 sponsors whose family members had landed between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2011 (the timeframe for the evaluation). The survey sample frame (presented in Table 2-4) was based on a 5% margin of error within groups and an expected response rate of 15%. This resulted in a total sample of 7,593 sponsors.

Members of this sample were mailed a sponsor survey package, which included a request for informed consent, a mail-in paper copy of the survey and a URL option to complete an online version of the survey. The survey was available in both English and French and a unique identifying code prevented the entry of duplicate survey responses. Several weeks following this initial mail-out, sponsors who had not yet responded to the survey were sent a reminder letter in order to help increase the response rate.

The survey generated 1,796 completed questionnaires (which included informed consent), representing an adjusted response rate of 30%, after discounting 1,562 application kits that were returned to CIC due to incorrect mailing addresses. The breakdown of responses and the margin of error for each stratum, as well as for the overall sample are provided in Table 2-4.

In the data analysis phase, the survey data were weighted, in order to account for stratified sampling, using an inverse probability weight. A comparison of the final weighted sample to the overall FRP population shows only minor differences between groups.

Table 2-4: Sponsor survey breakdown

	S&Ps	PGPs	Others	Total FRP
Population (2007-2011)	**185,852**	**39,708**	**16,895**	**242,455**
Share of total FC population	76.7%	16.4%	7.0%	100.0%
Survey sample frame	2,553	2,533	2,507	7,593
Completed surveys	**593**	**646**	**557**	**1,796**
Margin of error	4.0%	3.8%	4.1%	2.3%
Unadjusted response rate	23.2%	25.5%	22.2%	23.7%
Adjusted response rate*				**29.8%**

*The adjusted response rate excludes the returns due to incorrect addresses (1,562).

2.3.5. Case studies

Site visits to multiple CIC offices within Canada and overseas visa offices were conducted between January 2013 and March 2013. The objective of the site visits was to obtain a better understanding of how the FRP has been implemented in the field, the application processes that are in place, key issues and major challenges, opportunities for improvement, and to collect materials and tools (i.e., internal training booklets, templates, reports, etc). The site visits comprised: a process and document review; in-depth interviews with managers, staff, and stakeholders; observation of interviews between officers and applicants; and a workshop or group meeting with managers and officers to complete the visit.

Inland case studies included the case processing centres in Mississauga (CPC-M), Vegreville (CPC-V) and Ottawa (CPP-O), two local CIC offices (Etobicoke and Vancouver), and the CIC Call Centre in Montreal. Inland offices represent the majority of processing efforts related to the assessment of sponsors and in-Canada FC files. Overseas cases studies took place at visa offices in Accra, New Delhi, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Kingston. Overseas locations were selected in consultation with CIC International Region and were based on the proportion of the FC caseload processed, as well as ensuring that a variety of area-specific issues, such as the level and type of fraud, were represented in the evaluation.

2.3.6. Survey of Canadian Visa Offices Abroad (CVOAs)

While the overseas site visits provided an in-depth analysis of FC processing and issues at certain key locations, the broad perceptions, assessments and results of the Program at overseas missions was also sought through a survey of all 38 CVOAs that process Family Class files. The survey was pre-tested then carried out in March and April, 2013, and generated data to answer evaluation questions related to continuing need, as well as program performance in terms of delivery, integrity, efficiency and economy. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Technical appendices. Each visa office was asked to complete one survey that represented the consolidated views of that office. The response rate was 84.2% (32 of 38).

2.3.7. Focus groups with sponsored relatives

Six focus groups, involving a total of 42 sponsored relatives, were held during site visits to local CIC offices in Vancouver and Etobicoke. Sponsored relatives were identified through CIC administrative data and contacted by phone to participate. At each site visit, two focus groups were conducted with spouses and partners, and one with parents and grandparents. The objective of the focus groups was to gain feedback from successfully sponsored relatives regarding their experience with the FRP. A copy of the focus group moderator guide can be found in the Technical Appendices.

Table 2-5: Participation in focus groups

Location	Spouses and Partners	Parents/Grandparents	Total
Etobicoke	13	5	18
Vancouver	16	8	24
Total	29	13	42

2.4. Evaluation strengths and limitations

2.4.1. Evaluation strengths

The key strengths of the evaluation include:

- The use of data collected from multiple lines of evidence improved the reliability and validity of findings. This triangulation of the evaluation results indicated strong consistency of findings across data sources in the study.
- The sponsor survey represents the first comprehensive attempt at capturing information on social and cultural benefits of the overall Program. While previous research has looked at the benefits of PGPs to some extent, no prior work has been done on all categories of FC, or on the range of benefits assessed in the evaluation.
- Site visits to the various inland and overseas offices offered a unique opportunity to improve overall understanding of program implementation and allowed for in-depth interviews with visa officers who process FC files, comparisons of perceptions across offices, observation of challenges specific to FC processing and the identification of best practices across processing offices.

2.4.2. Limitations and mitigation strategies

The lines of evidence used in the evaluation had some limitations, which are described below, along with strategies that were used to mitigate them. These strategies, together with the triangulation of findings, were sufficient to ensure the evaluation findings can be used with confidence.

Gaps in financial data

Funding and spending for the FRP was not accounted and reported separately from other immigration programs for the duration of the evaluation. Therefore, it was not possible to report on budgeted and actual spending specific to the FRP over the timeframe covered by the evaluation.

- The evaluation attempted to mitigate the lack of Program-specific financial data by using estimated cost figures captured through a yearly cost management model (CMM) exercise.[20] CMM data was used to observe trends in spending, account for overall costs in the Program including costs of OGDs, as well as determine the unit cost of processing within the Program.

Potential bias in the sponsor survey

Given the self-selected nature of the sponsor survey and the response rate of 30%, there is potential for non-response bias; i.e., the characteristics of respondents may be different from those who did not respond. More specifically, there may be an overrepresentation of spouses who were deceived and/or an underrepresentation of sponsors complicit in fraudulent activities within the respondent group.

- Potential issues with non-response bias were mitigated through a comparison with administrative data to check for observable differences between the final survey sample and the total population of sponsors. This comparison demonstrated a high level of correspondence between key client characteristics of the survey and the population as a whole, in terms of age, education, gender, knowledge of official languages, birth country, etc (see Appendix D in the Technical Appendices for a full comparison of all characteristics). Therefore, inferences drawn from the survey data should be valid. As well, triangulation of survey data with other lines of evidence such as administrative data and focus group responses was also used to further increase the validity of the overall evaluation findings.

Gaps in administrative data

There were gaps in the administrative data available through the IMDB, including information on residence of family members in relation to their sponsors, onward migration of sponsored relatives, and additional family income resulting from sponsorship.

- These gaps were addressed through the sponsor survey and, to some extent, explored during focus groups with sponsored relatives.

Data on judicial reviews (JRs) that is captured by the department is incomplete, as CIC's Case Management Branch is only involved in those reviews where novel arguments are raised and where CIC has a vested interest. Therefore, the total number of FC cases that went to judicial review and the associated decisions were not known. As well, there was limited data available concerning the reason for Immigration Appeal Division decisions[21]. Additionally, data on appeals from the IAD is not organized by immigrant category (such as PGP, spouse, etc.), which limited its use in the analysis.

- The variety of data sources available for the evaluation helped to ensure that issues related to appeals could be accurately reflected. Data was used from IAD databases, CIC's FOSS

[20] The CMM is a CIC system that integrates financial and non-financial data, based on business processes. Updating the CMM within each department begins with a review of a department's activities and expenditures over a fiscal year, coordinated through a data-gathering exercise. The model is updated yearly (except for 2008-09) to provide information on how resources were used to deliver programs and services.

[21] Beginning in 2011, CPP-O began recording the results of all appeal-allowed files that were transitioned from the IAD to missions through their office. Therefore, only a full year of data was available from CPP-O for 2012, and it represented roughly 68% of all appeal-allowed cases for that year.

records and appeals database, the CPP-O database on appeal-allowed cases, as well as data captured through the CVOA survey.

While CIC has the ability to generate statistics on all inadmissibility cases, CIC systems do not track this data strictly on Family Class cases. Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) was also unable to provide data on removal orders and removals conducted on FC clients as A44 reports[22] are tracked by IRPA allegation only.

Focus group respondents were not selected at random.

The findings generated by the focus groups cannot be taken as representative of all sponsored relatives. Findings may be biased toward those with favourable opinions regarding the Program.

- These issues were mitigated through a comparison of the perspectives of sponsors (from the survey) and of field office staff (from the site visits) to confirm key findings. Focus group results are used sparingly in this report.

[22] An A44 report is completed when an immigrant is or may be inadmissible to Canada.

3. Findings

Using data from multiple lines of evidence, this chapter presents the key findings regarding the Program.

3.1. Program relevance

3.1.1. Continuing need for FRP

Finding #1: There is a continuing demand for the Family Reunification Program in all categories. While there was unanimous support for the reunification of spouses, partners and dependent children, stakeholders were more divided about the need for the parents and grandparents component.

Continuing demand for reunification

Given that the primary objective of the FRP is to provide a means by which Canadians and permanent residents can be reunited with their family members, the need for the FRP can be reflected by the continuing demand for family reunification among Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

As shown in Table 3-1[23], there was a relatively consistent demand for the Program between 2002 and 2011, with a spike in applications occurring from 2007-2009. This increase was largely the result of increases in PGP applications, which resulted from changes to file management processes when the PGP Program was paused in 2004 and 2005, as opposed to actual increases in application intake. There was a normal range in the number of applications in the S&P and Other FC categories over this timeframe. As well, the table shows that the total number of S&P applications from 2007 to 2011 (249,908 cases) surpassed the total number of applications for the preceding five year period (229,169 cases between 2002 and 2006).

Table 3-1: Trends in number of applications received (in cases)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Spouses & Partners	41,746	43,564	45,806	47,328	50,725	52,202	50,419	48,685	45,758	52,844	46,924
Children & Other FC	8,881	6,938	6,596	6,866	7,072	8,234	6,709	5,788	6,013	6,425	4,972
Parents and Grandparents	16,841	12,283	4,178	2,544	9,561	19,829	28,786	19,927	9,615	5,286	2,714
Family Class	**67,468**	**62,785**	**56,580**	**56,738**	**67,358**	**80,265**	**85,914**	**74,400**	**61,386**	**64,555**	**54,610**

Source: OMC stats, Book of basics

While the most recent FC application data from 2012 does show a slight decrease in the number of S&P applications from the year before, the 2012 numbers are within the normal range for S&P applications for the preceding 10-year period. The pause in the PGP Program, introduced in November 2011, also reduced the number of applications in that category and FC overall in 2012.

[23] Cases are used instead of persons in order to only reflect the number of principal applicants.

Data on permanent resident admissions also show that economic immigrants are a source of demand for the Family Reunification Program and suggest that the FRP may act as an incentive for economic immigration. As Table 3-2 shows, the likelihood that economic immigrants sponsor a relative increases with time in Canada – almost one-quarter of all economic immigrants who landed in 2000 have sponsored a relative since arriving in Canada.

Table 3-2: Number of economic immigrants (p.a.) who sponsor after landing, by sponsors' landing year 2000-2011

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Econ. Imm. - sponsors	13,435	13,914	11,657	8,786	7,813	7,236	5,743	4,846	4,632	3,905	2,876	765	**85,608**
Econ. Imm. - all p.a. landed	58,090	65,275	58,221	51,223	55,181	61,618	55,719	53,822	61,303	64,004	76,560	64,356	**725,372**
Proportion of Econ. Imm. who sponsor	**23.1%**	**21.3%**	**20.0%**	**17.2%**	**14.2%**	**11.7%**	**10.3%**	**9.0%**	**7.6%**	**6.1%**	**3.8%**	**1.2%**	**11.8%**

Source: CIC, sponsorship databases 2012 Q4 and PR data FF2012

Inventories

Table 3-3[24] shows that the demand for the FRP has outweighed the yearly levels space allocated by CIC for several years (see Table 1-5 for annual levels). Inventories in the Family Class have risen steadily since 2004, with only minor drops noted in 2007 and 2009. Most notably, the application inventory for the PGP category has been over 100,000 since 2004, reaching a high of 167,466 applications in 2011. The pause in PGP applications as well as increased processing of applications beginning in November 2011 accounts for the reduction of inventories in this category, and overall inventory reductions, in 2012.

Table 3-3: Inventory - Permanent Residents (in Persons) (includes CPC-M, overseas, in-Canada)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Family Class									
PR received	70,380	69,584	88,607	112,068	123,978	103,194	79,844	81,446	68,763
PR Landed	62,275	63,373	70,516	66,242	65,581	65,207	60,223	56,451	65,008
Inventory	--	159,507	163,859	157,887	169,067	166,294	204,779	237,677	218,156
Spouses, partners and children									
PR received	61,690	64,419	69,569	72,432	68,021	64,296	61,210	71,226	63,068
PR Landed	49,542	50,898	50,512	50,429	48,981	48,027	44,896	42,368	43,193
Inventory		51,513	55,598	54,485	58,378	55,553	53,815	70,211	75,973
Parents and Grandparents									
PR received	8,690	5,165	19,038	39,636	55,957	38,898	18,634	10,220	5,695
PR Landed	12,733	12,475	20,005	15,813	16,600	17,178	15,326	14,080	21,815
Inventory	105,594	107,994	108,261	103,402	110,689	110,741	150,964	167,466	142,183

Sources: dw sw eb;Development/CAIPS/imm_caips_e_c50 from dow nload of October 3, 2012; FOSS, GCMS, CPC, and NCMS

[24] Unlike intake and output, inventory represents the remaining files at the end of each reporting period, i.e., a snapshot in time.

Perceptions of need for the FRP – FC priority categories

When asked, all key informants across all respondent groups felt that there is a continued need for the FRP, stating that family reunification is an integral part of Canada's immigration history and helps people settle and/or integrate into Canadian society. A few informants also stated that the Program is needed because family reunification is part of Canadian legislation (i.e. IRPA). However, they also indicated that this need is strongest and clearest for the FC priority categories, as allowing immediate family members such as spouses, common-law partners and children to be together is an inherent need of all people, which conforms to a basic human right. Results from the survey of visa offices were similar to those of interviewees. As indicated in Table 3-4, staff at visa offices identified the strongest need for the FCP streams consisting of spouses, (FC1), common-law partners (FCC) and dependent children (FC3).

Public opinion within Canada also seems to correspond with the priority placed on spousal and dependent children sponsorships. A 2011 public opinion poll of a random sample of 1,755 Canadians, 18 years of age and older showed that "the vast majority [of Canadians] agree qualified immigrants should be allowed to bring their immediate families with them, including spouse and dependent children (81%)." [25]

Table 3-4: CVOA perceptions of need by FC category[26]

Survey question: To what extent is there a continuing need for the Family Reunification Program to include the following types of Family Class members?

Family Class Member	To a great extent		To some extent		Not at all
Spouse (FC1)	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Common-law partner (FCC)	81%	13%	3%	3%	0%
Conjugal partner (FCE)	36%	13%	13%	16%	23%
Dep. child/grandchild (FC3)	88%	6%	6%	0%	0%
Parent (FC4)	9%	19%	31%	31%	9%
Grandparent (FC4)	6%	0%	6%	28%	59%
Orphaned relative (FC5)	6%	19%	34%	22%	16%
Adopted child (FC6/9)	53%	22%	16%	9%	0%
Sole relative (FC7)	6%	0%	9%	25%	59%

Source: CVOA survey N=32

Perceptions of need for the FRP – PGP stream

Lower support for the PGP stream was articulated during key informant interviews. While many key informants believed that a continuing need for the PGP stream exists because they can contribute social, cultural and other benefits, some key informants felt either unsure about the value, or said there is not a particularly "strong need" for a PGP stream, mainly because of the associated costs (i.e., higher health care costs, less tax revenue due to retirement, etc.). As shown in Table 3-4, a majority of visa offices (59%) did not think there was a need to allow the

[25] 2011 Poll of Canadians on Immigration, Forum Research Inc. and reported in National Post, March 10, 2013.
[26] In the CVOA survey, visa offices were also able to answer "don't know".

sponsorship of grandparents. Visa offices also reported the continued need for parents, sole relatives and orphaned relatives to be lower than other categories.

Documentary evidence suggests that many Canadians agree with the sentiments of key informants and visa offices. Results from CIC's most recent consultations with stakeholder groups and members of the general public regarding immigration levels showed that participant views on the PGP stream were mixed, with some feeling that the stream helps to attract and retain immigrants, while others disagreed; though most felt it is particularly important to find the right balance within the stream.[27] These same participants also believed strongly that PGPs should not be given the same processing priority as spouses, partners and children. The earlier quoted public opinion poll[28] also found that almost two-thirds (63%) of Canadians disagreed that qualified immigrants should be allowed to bring their extended family with them, such as parents, grandparents, and adult children.

3.1.2. Alignment with CIC and federal priorities

Finding #2: The Family Reunification Program is well-aligned with CIC priorities, and, while the Government of Canada has more recently emphasized the benefits that derive from economic immigration, the Family Reunification Program remains a key pillar of Canada's approach to immigration.

Alignment with CIC priorities

Documentary evidence shows that the FRP is well-aligned with CIC priorities. Delivery of the Program is not only a formal commitment of CIC, aligned with its strategic outcomes, but is one of its legislative and regulatory obligations. The ability for citizens and permanent residents of Canada to sponsor their eligible family members is outlined in the IRPA and IRPR. As such, family reunification is formally recognized as a primary objective of CIC's immigration program, falling under Strategic Outcome 2 of the department's PAA: *Family and humanitarian migration that reunites families and offers protection to the displaced and persecuted.* Moreover, the benefits resulting from family reunification revealed through this evaluation (see Section 3.6.4), such as helping sponsored families settle and integrate into Canadian communities, and the potential to allow sponsors to work or go back to school, are aligned with CIC's Strategic Outcome 3: *Newcomers and citizens participate in fostering an integrated society.*

Beyond this, family reunification has been expressed as one of the priorities within CIC's 2013 Strategic Plan (for 2010-2015) and is mentioned regularly as a departmental priority within its yearly Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) and Departmental Performance Report (DPR). Operationally, CIC has demonstrated the importance of family reunification by designating certain family class applications as priority streams, and committed to expedited processing of these applications. In 2011, CIC further demonstrated the priority placed on processing Family Class applicants by implementing an Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification, which in addition to committing to redesigning the PGP program, sought to dramatically lower the PGP

[27] CIC regularly conducts public consultations in Canada among immigration stakeholders and the general public regarding immigration matters. For instance, over the summer of 2011, CIC held multiple roundtables across Canada and held online consultations related to the 2012 immigration levels and beyond (full results of these consultations may be found online at www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/consultations-imm-levels.pdf

[28] 2011 Poll of Canadians on Immigration, Forum Research Inc. and reported in National Post, March 10, 2013.

backlog through a combination of measures including a two year pause on new applications in coordination with a higher admissions levels.

Evidence from interviewees corresponds with the evidence found in documents. When asked, almost all key informants agreed that the FRP aligns well with CIC priorities. Reasons given by many informants for the strong alignment included recognition that reuniting families is an expressed strategic goal of CIC and that the Program meets the obligations set out in IRPA.

Alignment with GoC priorities

Documentary evidence shows that in recent years, the Government of Canada has placed increasing emphasis on promoting the economic benefits that may be derived from immigration and facilitating the labour market integration of newcomers. This focus has been described directly in a number of formal government documents. For example, following the 2008-2010 Global Recession, the Government of Canada outlined within successive Speeches from the Throne that its primary intention during this period was to promote the economy, secure the health and safety of Canadians, and stimulate the growth of new jobs. Since 2006, the central focus of the Government's statements has been to reaffirm the economic benefits that immigration brings to Canada. Likewise, the federal government has tended to emphasize funding for economic immigration within recent budgets. In Budget 2012, for instance, "the Government…placed top priority on attracting immigrants who have the skills and experiences our economy needs [and] committed to making our immigration system...sustain Canada's economic growth."[29]

Key informants, for the most part, felt that the Family Reunification Program is aligned with GoC priorities, although less so than with CIC priorities. Although there was recognition that the mandate of the Program, at the broadest level, is very important to the Government of Canada, several respondents noted that the current Program, particularly the PGP stream, is not directly aligned with the economically focused priorities of the Government of Canada.

3.1.3. Appropriateness of federal government role

Finding #3: The role of the federal government in the delivery of the FRP is appropriate.

The Canadian constitution grants the federal government the power to determine the number of immigrants admitted into Canada and the criteria against which they are selected.[30] However, as part of the shared jurisdiction over immigration, the federal government also collaborates with the provinces and territories to establish immigration goals and policies in coordination with PT mandates and their responsibilities in key areas such as settlement, health, social services, and adoption (see Section 1.2.3 for a complete description of the roles and responsibilities of federal and provincial authorities in the FRP).

When asked, almost all informants stated that the current federal role in the delivery of the FRP is appropriate. Many respondents also specified that the current level of federal oversight and management of the Program is necessary in order to ensure fairness and consistency, and to maintain a national perspective. These same respondents felt that it would not be appropriate for the provinces to take on an expanded role in the Program, primarily because they lack the

[29] Budget of Canada, 2012.

[30] Section 95 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

national perspective that is required and do not have an overseas presence for managing fraud or admissibility issues.

The evaluation could not identify any viable alternative approaches from other countries in terms of federal delivery of the Program. A review of relevant documents showed that the Canadian immigration context concerning federal delivery of sponsorship programming is quite unique when compared to other countries due to a number of reasons, including the shared jurisdictional nature of immigration within the Canadian Constitution and the existence of the Canada-Quebec Accord, which grants Quebec a significant immigration mandate.

However, while the overall federal role in the delivery of the FRP was felt to be appropriate, key informants pointed to the complexity of the overseas adoptions program within the FRP as an ongoing challenge. Specifically, a few provincial key informants felt that the federal government should take a more active role in overseas adoptions, with greater involvement in the country of origin of the child, such as providing more information to PTs on local conditions and on the legality of families abroad, so PTs are better able to assess the viability of the inter-country adoption. Speaking on the topic of adoptions, a few CIC informants also recognized the continuing complexities and the need for further collaboration involved with shared jurisdictional issues of inter-country adoptions.

3.2. Program performance--management outcomes

3.2.1. Effectiveness of program management

Finding #4: Overall, management of the FRP is effective, although some issues were identified with respect to communications and coordination, both within the CIC network and between CIC and CBSA.

During the development of the program logic model for the FRP, several indicators were selected to assess the effectiveness of program management, including: the existence of a clear, well-functioning governance structure; program policies and procedures that are evidence-based and legally defensible; and good communications and coordination between stakeholders. Each of these is assessed below.

Governance structure

The FRP governance structure, while imbedded within the broader governance of the overall immigration business line, operates as intended.

As described in section 1.2.4, the FRP is governed as one of several immigration business lines, with major policy and operational decisions made at various levels of executive management. Interviewees confirmed that there is no formalized governance structure specific to the FRP; however, they reported that there was no need for one as the current structure works well. There were no suggestions provided to improve the governance structure of the FRP.

Legally defensible policies and procedures

FRP policies and procedures are generally legally defensible due to active monitoring and regular assessment of legal risks and trends.

The Litigation Management Unit (BCL), under Case Management Branch, and the Department of Justice's Departmental Legal Services Unit (DLSU) within CIC actively monitor court challenges related to FRP and provide advice and/or risk-mitigation strategies on all planned policy changes to ensure their legal defensibility. There are also ongoing working groups and committees that coordinate CIC efforts to identify legal trends and assess the impact of future policy decisions.

Documentary evidence suggests that the work CIC undertakes to ensure policies are legally defensible is generally effective. A review of a sample of key court challenges on Family Class policies from 2008-2012 demonstrated that, in most cases, court challenges on FC policy grounds were dismissed at judicial review.

This review also revealed instances where federal court challenges were successful; however, in these cases the results were used to make the necessary policy changes to avoid future legal challenges.

The documentary evidence was supported by key informants, as the majority who responded to the question reported that a concerted effort is made to ensure policies and procedures are legally defensible.

Evidence-based policies and procedures

FRP policies and procedures are evidence-based to the extent that information is available; however, for some key areas of concerns, such as the level of fraud in the Program and the extent of any social and cultural benefits, there is little systematic or statistical data available.

Evidence from key informant interviews shows that the different branches within CIC are using the most relevant evidence available to support their decision-making. When asked what information they use to make decisions and manage the program, most respondents in NHQ reported using statistical information (such as applications and landing data, and performance measurement data), while some also used communication and information from others in CIC and information from other government departments. A few NHQ interviewees also use public consultations[31] or noted that their work can be reactive, in response to a policy trigger or driven by a request from the Minister. In contrast, visa offices were more likely to use operational information to make decisions and manage their program – many reported using targets and processing times, or quality assurance that is undertaken in their office. Many also discussed the importance of information on backlogs and other operational pressures, including resources, in their decision-making. A review of internal program documents and databases also showed that efforts are made to include various types of evidence in the creation of policy documents and other program-produced information.

While many key informants stated that policies and procedures are developed, wherever possible, with the support of relevant evidence, some also felt that the extent to which this occurs depends on the availability of accurate and reliable information and program statistics, which is not

[31] Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) regularly consults the public on issues that affect Canadians, such as levels planning, marriages of convenience and the redesigned parents and grandparents Program.

consistent across policy issues. In particular, statistical evidence was lacking on issues such as marriages of convenience, other types of fraud and social or cultural benefits of the Program, due to the difficulty in capturing "hard data" on these types of issues. In these cases, decision-makers relied on other evidence from subject-matter experts or on anecdotal information.

Communications and coordination

Communication and coordination mechanisms are in place and, for the most part, function well. Some issues were raised with respect to the clarity of roles and responsibilities, and timeliness of responses from local CICs, in particular, as well as from CPC-V and, to a lesser extent, CPC-M. A variety of factors, including lack of an integrated computer system, impede communication between CIC and CBSA.

Overall, interviewees felt that communications throughout the network are effective. There were, however, some issues with communication identified with respect to local CICs, CBSA and, to a lesser extent, CPC-V.

With regard to local CICs, the main issues with communication related to a lack of clarity regarding where to send requests for information about particular files and the length of time it can take to get a response to these requests. It was noted that office closures and the loss of Regional Program Advisors has created some of the uncertainty about appropriate contacts and responsibility for files at local CIC's. Respondents also noted that it was unclear whether or not they should expect to receive a response (for example, when an A44 report is sent to a local CIC). It was suggested that regardless of the request or nature of the communication, an email should be sent by the local CIC office acknowledging or confirming receipt of the information from the sender.

Of the key informants who discussed communications between CIC and CBSA, many felt that improvements were necessary. Communication issues reportedly resulted from the lack of an integrated system between the organizations, as CBSA has read-only access to GCMS and is unable to enter notes to a file. Some CBSA interviewees reported problems working with GCMS and felt that, compared to CAIPS, it is an inferior system, for which they have received little or no training. As well, it was noted that the two departments don't necessarily have the same priorities, as CBSA cases dealing with terrorism or organized crime naturally take precedence over investigating marriages of convenience. CBSA informants also described having limited resources to conduct their work, which would serve to magnify this issue. Most CBSA hearings officers also reported that issues result from the destruction of file material in visa offices after only two years. It was felt that this information was required to keep track of family composition and was necessary to adequately represent CIC's position on a case. Suggestions were made to scan critical files and store them electronically.

Of those interviewees who discussed communications with CPC-V, many found it to be effective, although some noted issues with the time it can take to get a response. Similarly, although most key informants who commented on communications with CPC-M found them to be effective, a few also cited issues related to the timeliness of responses. Issues with updating the Right of Permanent Resident Fee (RPRF) in a timely way was mentioned as an issue by a few interviewees.

The majority of interviewees who spoke about communications with NHQ found them to be effective, with those working inside NHQ highlighting the solid relationships and collaboration between the policy and OMC branches, in particular. Where issues were noted, they generally

resulted from changes to the Program, which reportedly occurred frequently and over a short time frame, serving to overwhelm the system and make timely communication difficult. Provinces with MOUs related to sponsorship default were also more likely to indicate that communications with NHQ are effective than those without an MOU.

The visa office survey further substantiates the analysis above (see Table 3-5) – overall, visa offices were most likely to rate communications with local CICs, CBSA hearings officers and CPC-V from fair to very poor. With regard to local CICs, the main issues identified by visa offices were consistent with key informant interviews – there are no specific contacts identified at local CICs, which makes it difficult to get answers to questions, and responses are not timely due to a lack of service standards, work volume and cuts in those offices. Communication issues with CBSA were usually the result of differences in opinion or understanding of decisions on files. Visa officers also mentioned not having many opportunities to discuss issues with CBSA officers. Again, regarding communication with CPC-V, visa office responses were consistent with key informants – the issue is primarily related to the length of time it takes to get a response.

Table 3-5: CVOA ratings of communications

Survey question: How would you rate communications with the following offices?

Office	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
CPC-M	21.9%	50.0%	21.9%	6.2%	0.0%
CPC-V	12.9%	29.0%	41.9%	12.9%	3.2%
CPPO	21.4%	42.9%	28.6%	7.1%	0.0%
Local CICs	3.4%	20.7%	55.2%	6.9%	13.8%
CBSA Hearings Officers	10.0%	26.7%	43.3%	13.3%	6.7%

Source: CVOA survey N = 32

IRPA regulations and various operations manuals articulate the roles and responsibilities of NHQ, CPCs, local offices, missions abroad and the Call Centre with regard to the FRP, with updates provided via operational bulletins (and later integrated into the manuals). However, it was a challenge for the evaluators to comprehend the entire picture since it emerges only through a careful exploration across many documents.

Some interviewees felt there are issues related to the clarity of roles and responsibilities across offices. A few others stated that issues arose when the Program underwent changes, such as when new OBs were issued or with increased centralization and office closures. The inland offices (excluding CPP-O) and CBSA officers were most likely to report that roles and responsibilities are not always clear. The inland offices were also most often referred to when respondents were identifying where the lack of clarity existed. Confusion regarding the shared role of CBSA and CIC was also mentioned by a few respondents.

3.2.2. Program responsiveness

Finding #5: CIC has introduced a variety of strategies, such as GCMS and centralized processing, that allow the FRP to be more responsive to changing operational conditions. However, the ability to shift workload between offices has also introduced some issues related to monitoring and managing office targets, and having sufficient local knowledge to identify problematic applications.

The frequently changing operational environment (such as the implementation of GCMS throughout the network, new tools and initiatives resulting from modernization, and the Action Plan for Faster Family Reunification) is one of the challenges faced by the Family Reunification Program. However, the interviews and case studies showed that a variety of methods are used by visa offices and other processing offices implicated in the Program in order to be responsive to the current context.

The introduction of GCMS and centralization of file processing have made it possible for offices to share work and resources across the network. For example, busier visa offices are able to have some of their files processed by another office (or less busy offices can request work from other visa offices), or particular tasks can be undertaken by an office for a set duration in order to make the most effective use of varying capacities across the network at particular points in time. Although sharing of workload is typically done between offices in the same region, there are other examples where work is shared between inland and overseas offices (low-risk FC4 files are processed at CPPO and finalized overseas, for example).

Respondents also spoke about the different ways that resources can be utilized to maximize efficiencies and ensure that targets are met. For example, some missions will share staff resources between offices or will add temporary resources in peak processing times. As well, resources are often shifted within an office in order to accommodate processing priorities. This was noted in all missions where a case study occurred – offices described the increase in the number of TRVs that required processing in the summer months and the fact that resources were shifted from PR processing in order to meet TRV processing needs at this time. Additionally, offices would be proactive with their caseloads by over-processing PR files early in the year so resources could be available for TRV processing when it became necessary in the summer months. Offices also reported making administrative changes (developing templates, using location and query functions in GCMS to track file flow, for example) in order to improve efficiency within their office.

However, these attempts to be responsive to the current context also had their drawbacks and respondents noted that sharing work across the network can create some problems at the same time as solving others. For example, when workload is moved between offices, a corresponding shift in GCMS is not necessarily made. Therefore, the office that actually completed the work on the file is not reflected as having done so and it is not counted towards their targets. As well, when resource allocations are made the following year, these are not based on the actual work conducted by the office; rather, a determination is made based on what has been tracked in GCMS.

A related problem is with bottlenecks in the system. When one office has backlogs and is not able to send their files to another processing location for further assessment or finalization in a timely way, the visa offices may not have enough files to process within a reasonable timeframe to meet their targets in certain categories. A few key informants noted that reliance on other offices to meet targets may not be practical in a system where all offices have their own distinct

workload issues, targets, timelines and competing priorities, and where there is no overarching systematic approach to tracking file flow across the network.

Key informants also noted that there are important considerations that go beyond technology when work sharing occurs. Missions exist, in part, because local knowledge is imperative for dealing with complex cases. It is especially important for FC cases where every country will have different laws and customs related to marriage and other family relationships, as well as official documents articulating these. Therefore, if part of a caseload is shifted from one mission to another, there must be a mechanism in place to ensure that local knowledge is also transferred accordingly. There is currently no formal mechanism in place to achieve this.

3.3. Program performance—information and communication

3.3.1. Quality of information and client understanding

Finding #6: Clients in the FRP are using CIC information sources and, overall, are satisfied with these tools and services.

Finding #7: Sponsors and principle applicants generally have a good understanding of the application process and requirements, although some challenges exist.

There are a variety of products and services available to clients who wish to sponsor a family member or immigrate to Canada themselves as a sponsored relative. These include the CIC Call Centre[32], CIC's website, the application guide and forms for the FRP, as well as direct communication with CIC via emails, letters and telephone. Both the quality of this information and clients' level of understanding of the information were assessed in the evaluation.

Clients access information

As Table 3-6 shows, the majority of sponsors took advantage of the main products and services CIC has in place to assist them with the application process – more than 70% sought help from the Call Centre and/or CIC staff, over 80% used the e-payment tool, and over 90% used the CIC website and the CIC application guide. As well, almost half the sample used all five of these services; only 4% used none. On average, sponsors used 3.9 of these five services during the application process.

Table 3-6: Sponsor use of CIC FC products and services

Product/Service	Used product/ service	N
The CIC application guide	95.4%	1,713
CIC website	90.9%	1,715
The e-payment process	82.2%	1,647
Help from CIC staff	72.8%	1,664
The CIC Call Centre	71.9%	1,683

Source: Sponsor survey

[32] The CIC Call Centre is only available to those sponsors and potential immigrants residing in Canada.

Sponsor and sponsored relative feedback on quality of information and client understanding

Sponsors were asked to rate the clarity/complexity and the helpfulness of FRP products and services. The results, presented in Table 3-7, were positive for every product and service overall, with the clarity of the application guide, the e-payment process and the clarity of the CIC website ranked most positively by sponsors (between 86% and 91% positive response). Less positive feedback was received on the complexity of the PR and sponsor application forms, and information available to clients on the status of their application while awaiting a final decision, with one-third of sponsors providing negative feedback on these products and client service.

As well, sponsored relatives in the focus groups described the application process as complex and some found it confusing. Although they felt that the application form was clear, they reported that it was excessively detailed. Also consistent with the sponsor survey, a lack of accurate, updated information about their case while their application was being processed was a concern to all focus group participants.

Table 3-7: Sponsor views on CIC FC Products and Services

Survey question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about these products and services?

Product/Service	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N
The CIC Call Centre was useful	25.5%	56.8%	10.5%	7.1%	1,210
CIC staff were helpful	25.3%	58.8%	10.3%	5.6%	1,212
The information on the CIC website was clear	25.6%	60.7%	10.3%	3.4%	1,559
The CIC application guide was clear	29.7%	61.4%	7.0%	1.9%	1,633
The sponsor application form was too complex	9.5%	27.0%	55.5%	8.1%	1,639
The permanent resident application form was too complex	9.2%	27.0%	56.0%	7.8%	1,582
I felt well informed about the status of my application while awaiting a final decision	14.5%	48.8%	23.9%	12.9%	1,657
The e-payment process was difficult	3.3%	10.0%	56.6%	30.1%	1,354
Overall, the application process was clear	17.7%	67.6%	12.1%	2.5%	1,712

Source: Sponsor survey

Despite reporting some issues with the overall quality[33] of information provided by CIC, clients reported having a solid understanding of the application requirements, with 94% of sponsors (N=1767) saying they understood what information they were required to submit with their application and 96% of sponsors (N=1753) indicating they were clear on the undertaking they signed.

[33] Quality refers to the accessibility, accuracy, clarity and timeliness of information.

Key informant and visa office perceptions of the quality of information and client understanding

Findings from the visa office survey are consistent with the opinions of key informants, with offices reporting that most applicants and sponsors have a moderate to good understanding of the application requirements. They were, however, more likely to believe this of sponsors than principal applicants.

Table 3-8: Visa office opinion of the extent to which clients understand requirements

Survey question: In your opinion, to what extent do prospective Family Class immigrants to Canada understand the PR application requirements? In your opinion, to what extent do prospective sponsors understand the sponsor application requirements?

Clients	To a great extent		To some extent		Not at all	N
FC immigrants	3%	38%	38%	22%	0%	32
FC sponsors	11%	29%	54%	7%	0%	28

Source: CVOA survey

Where visa offices did note problems with potential understanding by FRP clients, they cited limited language and communications skills as a barrier to understanding, particularly for FC immigrants. As well, they noted that sponsors may show difficulty in understanding some requirements, such as the general requirement for the sponsor to reside in Canada.

Some key informants also identified weaknesses in the availability, clarity, accuracy, or timeliness of information. Consistent with visa offices, some informants felt that the language used by CIC in its information products is too difficult for clients to understand or would be inaccessible for those whose primary language is not English or French. Similar to concerns raised by sponsors, key informants felt that the vast amount of information available to clients tends to be overwhelming, dispersed and complex, leading to client confusion and possibly to their desire to hire an immigration consultant. With respect to the CIC website, some respondents felt that certain sections related to the FRP are confusing and could be made more user-friendly. A few informants also felt the application forms were complicated, the guides were too long or were not sufficiently updated and that clients do not receive enough information regarding the status of their submitted application.

Trends in completeness of applications

An incomplete application is another indicator of client understanding of the application process and requirements. There is limited data on application completeness, however, what is available indicates that most applicants have understood the application requirements enough to submit a complete package. For example, data from CPC-M show that from 2008 to 2010 between 18% and 20% of all FC applications were returned to sponsors for additional information[34].

[34] These percentages are not a true percentage of all cases, as additional information can be requested on a file more than once. As well, additional information is more likely to be requested when a file has been awaiting processing for some time – PGP applications in the inventory, for example, are more likely to be returned for additional information as some documents may have expired. Therefore, as an indicator of client knowledge, the percentages likely overestimate the proportion of clients who completed their original application incorrectly.

Other data related to completeness checking of PGP applications following the letter campaigns[35] of 2011 and 2012 showed a 22% rate of incomplete applications. The reasons for an incomplete application that were listed most frequently by CPC-M were: form 5406 (additional family information) was either incomplete or not provided, and proof of relationship to either the sponsor or the spouse/partner was missing. Data from the sponsor survey support the administrative data as only 14% of sponsors said they were required to send more information because the original application was missing something that was required.

Use of an immigration representative

The use of an immigration representative may be a further indicator of the perceived complexity of the application process – sponsors and/or their relatives may use representatives when they believe the process will be too difficult or complex. Overall, 27% of surveyed sponsors (N= 1753) said they hired a representative, ranging from 19% of PGP sponsors to 30% of S&P sponsors. Of those, (N= 469), 36% reported doing so because the process was too complicated, 32% because the forms were too complicated and 20% because they were unable to fill out the form in either English or French. In fact, the reason most often given for using an immigration representative was the sponsor's belief that having professional help would improve their chances of a positive decision on their application (said by 52% of those who reported hiring a representative).

3.4. Program performance--application processing

3.4.1. Supporting consistent and defensible decision-making

Finding #8: There are a variety of training opportunities, tools, and sources of functional guidance available to CIC staff which are generally sufficient and of high quality. However, training and guidance are not always delivered in a timely manner, and CIC key informants felt more training and updates could be beneficial in certain areas.

Training, tools, functional guidance and quality assurance were identified as important to support consistent and defensible decision-making. Overall, key informants reported that training, tools and functional guidance were sufficient for them to do their jobs, while some felt improvements could be made in one or more of these areas. The inland offices were most likely to identify issues in one of these areas. While few problems were noted by staff at visa offices, they did offer recommendations for improvements that could be made.

Training

A variety of training opportunities were described by respondents, with in-house training, on-the-job training and job shadowing/mentoring being the most common. Respondents cited minimal

[35] Starting mid-November 2011, CPC-M began sending letters to sponsors with the oldest sponsorship applications in the inventory, requesting the submission of the IMM 0008 for their parent(s) or grandparent(s) with all supporting documentation. Sponsors were given 90 days to comply with the request and informed that should the requested documents not be received at CPC-M within the 90-day time frame, the determination would be made that the sponsor is no longer interested in bringing their parent(s) or grandparent(s) to Canada and their application would be closed. If the application was received within the 90-day time frame but there was missing information or documentation, the entire application was returned to the sponsor with a letter advising them they had 30 days to return the application with the missing elements; otherwise, the application would be closed.

issues with these types of training. In fact, for many of those working in visa offices, it was felt that on-the-job training, when paired with support and direction from more experienced colleagues, is the best way to learn the job. A few interviewees also spoke about the formal Foreign Service Development Program (FSDP) and all who mentioned it felt it was solid training for visa officers.

A few respondents felt that not enough training is provided. The most commonly mentioned improvement to training was more refresher training for field officers. This finding is supported by the Fall 2011 Auditor General's[36] report, which found that initial training for visa officers is well structured and rigorous, but that follow-up training is less systematic. In addition to refresher training, better training on GCMS was mentioned by some, as was training on IRPA and immigration processing. Also important was the timing of the training as a few respondents noted receiving training (such as IRPA training) after having been in their jobs for a long period of time. It was felt that having the training up front would be most beneficial.

The CVOA survey also examined the issue of training – the ratings are shown in Table 3-9. The training provided to TD staff, locally engaged support staff and single assignment staff was viewed less positively. In the case of single assignment staff and TD staff, it was reported that the need for training depends on the previous experience the individuals have in processing applications. Overall, visa offices that felt that TD staff do not receive enough training and do not have enough experience reviewing applications, and that single assignment staff would benefit from more refresher training and specific training modules (such as adoption). Regarding locally engaged support staff, it was felt that more formal training is needed, as well as training in a larger variety of formats, such as webinars and additional communications from CIC.

Table 3-9: Visa office opinion of the extent to which training is sufficient

Survey question: To what extent is the training, including on-the-job training, for each of the following positions sufficient?

Staff Position	To a great extent		To some extent		Not at all	N
CBO FS	37%	53%	7%	3%	0%	30
Single assignment staff	5%	37%	47%	5%	5%	19
TD staff	0%	26%	52%	17%	4%	23
LE decision makers	14%	61%	21%	4%	0%	28
LE support staff	0%	42%	45%	10%	3%	31

Source: CVOA survey

Tools and functional guidance

GCMS was the most often mentioned tool that staff use to help perform their duties, although a few people stated that GCMS is not very user friendly. This is not surprising considering the number of respondents who reported issues with guidance and training related to GCMS. However, a few people felt that over time and with more experienced users, GCMS would be a

[36] Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2011 Fall Report of the Auditor General of Canada, www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201111_e_35962.html.

more useful system than CAIPS. A few people in the CPCs mentioned that WebCart is an extremely useful tool but requires updating.

When asked about functional guidance, operational manuals, operational bulletins, IRPA and IRPR were mentioned most frequently by key informants. As well, some respondents reported receiving guidance from their colleagues and supervisors within their office, and guidance from staff in NHQ (either from OMC, IR or BCL). For the most part, functional guidance was seen as effective although there were a couple of issues identified. Some respondents felt that manuals are not updated regularly, which was echoed in the Fall 2011 Auditor General's report[37]. However, a few respondents also spoke about the modernization of manuals, which is to be completed soon, and the anticipated improvements that will result. As well, a few respondents noted that OMC guidance is not timely enough or does not provide adequate detail, that GCMS guidance is lacking and that OBs are provided to field offices with no time for review prior to implementation. A review of OBs issued since 2007 found that they are rarely sent in advance of the change coming into force (only 3 of 18); indeed, more often it was sent after the change took effect (6 of 18) and the remainder were sent on the day changes took effect.[38]

Visa offices rated functional guidance from six sources and the results are presented in Table 3-10 below. Guidance from OMC and IR Geographics Desk was considered poor or very poor by about one- fifth of visa offices. The most frequent reason given for a low rating for guidance received from OMC was that responses to queries take too long or there is no response. The same reason for a low rating was provided for IR Geographics Desk.

Regarding other types of guidance, lower ratings varied according to source of guidance: manuals received a lower score because they were not updated fast enough (12 offices said this); and bulletins because they were difficult to locate (11). Missions that gave high marks invariably said the guidance was informative or timely. These findings are consistent with those from key informant interviews.

Table 3-10: CVOA ratings of functional guidance

Survey question: How would you rate the guidance you receive from the following offices?

Guidance	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	N
Manuals	15.6%	59.4%	21.9%	0.0%	3.1%	32
OBs	12.5%	62.5%	18.8%	6.2%	0.0%	32
OMC	6.9%	37.9%	34.5%	10.3%	10.3%	29
IR Geographic Desk	16.7%	46.7%	16.7%	16.7%	3.3%	30
Case Management Branch	31.0%	51.7%	17.2%	0.0%	0.0%	29
Litigation management	25.9%	51.9%	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%	27

Source: CVOA survey

One overall comment made by key informants was that a more coordinated approach between offices, as well as additional sharing of information and exchanges of staff between offices would

[37] Ibid.

[38] Changes in OBs often represent regulatory amendments that come into force upon registration by the Governor in Council (GIC) and, as such, they are subject to cabinet confidence. Therefore, CIC may not publish instructions or information until GIC approval. Publications of instructions are timed with GIC approval and communication releases.

be helpful, particularly between the missions and inland offices. It was felt that this would assist staff to better understand the Program and how it is implemented in other offices, see how tools such as GCMS are used within offices to improve operational efficiency, as well as clarify roles and improve communication, as noted earlier.

Quality assurance

Some respondents, when asked about consistency and defensibility of decision-making, spoke about QA that is conducted in processing offices and the positive impact this has on the quality of decision-making. QA takes many forms, according to respondents – network-wide QA exercises, QA on individual decision-making by senior officers, and QA that is specific to an issue seen in a mission[39]. QA was mentioned by all respondent groups as helpful in ensuring quality of decision-making.

3.4.2. Consistency and defensibility of application decisions

Finding #9: Decision-making in the FRP is defensible and generally consistent and supported by training, tools and functional guidance.

Overall, key informants felt that the training, tools and functional guidance provided to staff contributed to defensible and consistent decision-making.

Consistency

The manuals and operational bulletins, which are available online, are meant to ensure program delivery is consistent across offices, both inland and overseas. OMC also provides instructions on documenting decisions to maximize consistency and minimize the chances of officer decisions being overturned on appeal.

In 2011-12, a program integrity network-wide exercise was conducted by CIC,[40] which assessed the consistency of decision-making on FC1, FCC and FCE cases[41]. QA monitors were asked to review files and determine if they would have come to the same conclusion as the original decision-maker on the sponsorship eligibility of the principal applicant and on the bona fides of their relationships. The study found a high level of consistency in decision-making for both of these elements (94% and 95% agreement, respectively). These findings are consistent with reports from surveyed visa offices, 100% of which rated the consistent application of IRPA, regulations and operational guidance to decision-making as either very good or good. Reasons for consistency noted by visa offices were that regular discussions between officers and well-documented, clear notes ensure consistency in decision-making.

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[39] To illustrate with examples, Beijing has a Quality Assurance Framework and conducts QA exercises on issues specific to their office on an annual basis. They completed the following QA exercises related to FC files in 2009-10: the quality of decision-making on spousal applications; verification of birth certificates on a random sample of dependent child applications; the passport process for FC priority files; and email inquiry responses. As well, network-wide QA exercises are also conducted by OMC's Program Integrity Division, an example of which was the exercise on the quality of decision-making on spouse and partner applications (FC1, FCC and FCE) conducted in 2011-12.

[40] CIC: 2011 /12 Program Integrity Network-wide Exercise - Family Class Spouses and Partners (FC1/FCC/FCE/FCH), October 2012.

[41] FC1 are spouse cases, FCC are common-law partner cases and FCE are conjugal partner cases.

Of those key informants who discussed consistency of decision-making across officers, many felt that it was consistent while some felt there were some issues with consistency. The issues identified were mainly related to lack of consistent functional guidance within the office (different team leaders providing different advice) and inconsistencies resulting from officers' use of their discretion in decision-making, as some can be more enforcement oriented than others. Issues with consistency were noted primarily by the inland offices. Offering refresher training, conferring more with colleagues and standardizing processing procedures were mentioned as ways consistency can be improved. These recommendations were mirrored in the 2011-12 network-wide exercise[42], which reported that, "Although there is a high level of consistency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) should continue to invest resources in training and functional guidance and continue to encourage office-specific quality assurance and individual monitoring by management, in order to ensure that decision makers have a clear understanding of the Regulations pertaining to sponsorship requirements".

Defensibility

Visa office survey respondents felt visa officer decisions are sound, and rated the defensibility of FC Priority decisions as very good (42%) or good (48%). The defensibility of FC 4 decisions was rated slightly higher with 57% rating these as very good and 43% as good. A detailed documentation of the rationale and the steps taken to render a fair decision were the main comments explaining why decisions by visa officers are defensible.

As well, almost all of the key informants who spoke about defensibility of decision-making felt that decision-making is defensible and there are no real concerns in this regard. However, good note taking and training on documenting decisions were mentioned as ways defensibility could be improved by some respondents.

As previously noted, the network-wide quality assurance exercise for S&P used quality monitors to assess the quality of decision-making on files, and this included the documentation of decisions. The study found that, "Overall, the QA monitors were satisfied with the level of detail included in the notes in 1411 (97%) cases reviewed[43]" and "there is a high level of satisfaction with the documentation of suspected relationships of convenience, the assessment of R4, the requirements regarding R133(1), the reasons for referral to the CBSA and to the local CIC offices, and interview notes. However, it has been noted in 4% of the cases reviewed that the notes, in general, were insufficient to substantiate the initial decision maker's conclusion". The report also recommended that "the Department standardizes expectations on the documentation of decisions".[44] This supports the overall finding that decision-making is defensible and also key informants' views that training on how to document a decision is important for ensuring defensibility of decision-making.

Finding #10: Appeals at the Immigration Appeal Division and judicial review cannot be linked to the defensibility of visa officer decision-making due to insufficient data and the use of different types of information by Immigration Appeal Division members compared to visa officers.

[42] CIC: 2011 /12 Program Integrity Network-wide Exercise - Family Class Spouses and Partners (FC1/FCC/FCE/FCH), October 2012.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

What judicial review and IAD appeals data imply about defensibility

During the planning for the evaluation, indicators of defensibility of decision-making were developed that related to the results of appeals and/or leaves granted for judicial review.

The data on judicial review (JR) and appeals that was available for the evaluation was not sufficiently complete to be used to develop overall findings on the defensibility of CIC decisions for a variety of reasons:

- CIC is not involved in all JRs, only those where unique issues are presented or where CIC has a vested interest. Although BCL tracks data on those cases in which it is involved, the overall picture of JRs for Family Class applications is not documented.
- CIC does not track decisions on appeals from the IAD in a comprehensive way. In 2011, CPP-O began recording results of all appeal-allowed files that were transitioned from the IAD to missions through their office. However, a full year of data from 2012 provided for the evaluation represents only approximately 68% of all appeal-allowed cases for 2012 (the IAD reported 1437 appeal-allowed cases in 2012 and CPP-O recorded results of 984 cases in 2012).
- The variables that are tracked in the CPP-O database, while valuable, were not identified systematically through discussion with other offices (including policy, IR and OMC) to determine whether they represent the full range of information that could be beneficial to officers and policy-makers for future use.
- Appeal data from the IAD is not broken down by immigration category so an assessment of appeals that are allowed or refused for S&P versus PGP is not possible.
- The CVOA survey showed that 63% of visa offices track the number of their decisions that were appealed to the IAD; however, only 41% track the decisions made by the IAD on those cases.
- Data from CPP-O's appeal-allowed database show that a large proportion of the appeal files approved at the IAD do not provide a reason for the approval (205 of 984 or 21%). This was also observed during a file review conducted at the site visits – in some cases an appeal can be allowed by a member of the IAD without a rationale supporting the decision.

These issues, taken together, show that a gap exists in information on appeals and judicial review that could further improve the defensibility of decision-making. This gap was also identified in the network-wide program integrity exercise[45], which reported that, "Litigation outcomes should be considered alongside anticipated regulatory amendments to ensure the file record is sufficient in terms of possible future litigation, and for program integrity purposes".

As well, a review of the processes used by the IAD revealed that their decisions may not provide an indication of the defensibility of visa officer decisions at all. The IAD is able to consider new evidence (*de novo* information) presented by sponsors when they appeal the visa officer decision. The use of *de novo* information means the IAD may not actually be considering the same facts that were used by visa officers to render their decision. As well, the appeal of the visa officer decision is by the sponsor and that is the individual whose case is heard at the IAD, whereas the visa officer will interview the sponsored relative in most cases. For these reasons, it was concluded that the results of IAD appeals cannot always be linked to the defensibility of the visa

[45] Ibid.

officer's original decision – when the IAD overturns a decision, the visa officer may not have made the wrong decision.

As mentioned above, some visa offices do track decisions on appeals and incorporate the results into their decision-making. For example, New Delhi has a Litigation and Appeals Unit that reviews all appeal decisions made at the IAD, and all JRs conducted by the federal court. The results are tracked over time and analyzed to identify themes or highlight processes or particular wording that can be incorporated into officer decision-making and note-taking in order to improve the defensibility of their decisions. Their process can serve as a best practice for other offices and as a model for CIC if a centralized appeals tracking database is being contemplated in the future.

3.4.3. Timeliness of application decisions

Finding #11: The service standards for FCP processing are not being met and the processing times for all FC categories increased from 2007-2011; moreover, a variety of challenges exist to ensuring timeliness of decision-making in the FRP.

Application processing times

Table 3-11 provides the average processing times for Family Class applications, organized by immigration category, between 2002 and 2012. An overall trend is seen with average times decreasing in the S&P and Other FC categories from 2002 until 2007, then increasing thereafter, until 2012. Average processing times for FC applications, overall, began increasing in 2005. The average processing time for PGP applications increased in every year. It is noteworthy that the number of landings in the FC also declined in each year from 2007-2011 (see Table 1-4).

Table 3-11: Average processing time (in months) of sponsorship applications (negative and positive decisions), final decision years 2002-2012

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
All family class											
Overall processing	15	15	14	15	16	16	17	18	19	21	28
Sponsor assessment	3	2	2	2	4	6	6	7	6	7	13
PR assessment	12	12	11	13	12	10	11	12	13	15	14
Spouses and partners											
Overall processing	13	13	11	10	10	10	11	11	12	13	14
Sponsor assessment	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
PR assessment	11	10	9	8	7	8	8	9	9	10	11
Parents and Grandparents											
Overall processing	18	22	27	37	41	43	46	49	52	59	58
Sponsor assessment	3	3	3	3	9	22	26	26	25	26	37
PR assessment	15	19	25	33	32	20	20	23	27	33	21
Children and others											
Overall processing	15	15	15	14	14	14	15	15	16	18	18
Sponsor assessment	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
PR assessment	13	13	13	13	12	12	13	13	14	16	16

Note: Due to rounding, number of months for the PR assessment plus the sponsor assessment may not equal number of months for the overall assessment.

Source: OPMB data file, OPS 2012-2280, 2013-02-07

For spouse/partner applications, the average time to conduct the sponsor assessment was consistent at around 2 months from 2008-2011. The increase in processing time is notable for the PR assessment, which increased from 8 months in 2007 to 10 months in 2011. The most recent data for 2012 shows a further increase to 11 months.

A comparison of in-Canada S&P cases and those processed overseas (see Table 3-12) shows a higher average processing time for files that are processed in Canada (an average of 17 months at CPC-V vs 14 months for cases processed by CPC-M and then overseas). The data show that the largest differential is in the stage prior to the assessment of the PR application – the steps leading up to and including the assessment of sponsor eligibility takes an average of 8 months at CPC-V and only 2 months at CPC-M.

As noted earlier, processing times for PGPs have increased in each year represented in Table 3-11, rising from 18 months in 2002 to 59 months in 2011. The table shows that beginning in 2006, processing times for PGPs shifted between the sponsor assessment and the PR assessment, and the processing time for the sponsor application had increased to represent almost half of the overall processing time for these files beginning in 2007. This is due to the fact that the level of visa admissions on a yearly basis was lower than demand (intake was too high), which resulted in a backlog. CIC made the decision to only process enough sponsorship applications at CPC-M to meet visa requirements on a yearly basis and store the remainder. Therefore, the increase in processing time of the sponsorship application is due to the storage of applications.

Although the processing time for the sponsor application remained relatively steady between 2008 and 2011, there was an increase in the processing time for PR applications over the same timeframe.

Table 3-12: Spouses and Partners–Average processing time of sponsorship application (all decisions) by processing office, final decision years 2002-2012

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Mth avg. for sponsor assessment	3	5	6	6	8	9	7	7	7	9	8
Mth avg. for PR assessment	8	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	6	9
Mth avg. for overall process	11	13	13	13	15	15	14	14	15	16	17
CPC Vegreville (in Canada)	**5,219**	**6,748**	**5,626**	**6,679**	**7,467**	**5,330**	**5,666**	**4,627**	**3,706**	**4,058**	**6,188**
Mth avg. for sponsor assessment	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Mth avg. for PR assessment	11	11	10	10	9	9	9	9	10	11	11
Mth avg. for overall process	14	13	12	11	11	10	11	11	12	12	14
Other processing points (abroad)	**28,315**	**37,367**	**35,569**	**38,597**	**37,266**	**39,051**	**38,405**	**38,276**	**37,102**	**34,055**	**35,506**
Mth avg. for sponsor assessment	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3
Mth avg. for PR assessment	11	11	9	9	8	8	9	9	10	10	11
Mth avg. for overall process	13	13	12	12	11	11	11	11	12	13	14
Overall processing points	**33,534**	**44,115**	**41,195**	**45,276**	**44,733**	**44,381**	**44,071**	**42,903**	**40,808**	**38,113**	**41,694**

Source: OPMB data file, OPS 2012-2280, 2013-02-07

Processing times for the Other FC category remained steady for the sponsorship application, but increased from 12 months in 2007 to 16 months in 2011 for the PR application.

Service standards

CIC has a service standard for processing spouse, partner and dependent children files: a selection decision for 80% of visas within 12 months of initial application[46]. Table 3-13 presents the proportion of the FC Priority cases that were finalized within 12 months of initial application. CIC was unable to meet the service standard in each year of the study and the proportion within the standard decreased over time to only 64% in 2011. The most recent data available shows that this number decreased again in 2012, to 62%.

The CVOA survey found that 68% of visa offices typically meet the departmental service standards for processing FC Priority applications and 78% reported meeting their processing target for FCP in 2012. The reasons cited for missing the target included loss of a decision-maker, office closures increasing the workload, diversion of resources to other programs, and assessment of complex cases involving fraud. Three-quarters of visa offices met their target for PGP application processing in 2012. The reasons for missing the target included: competing priorities in the office, loss of a decision-maker, and unrealistic targets due to different challenges with PGP files.

Table 3-13: Percentage of FC1, FCC, FCE, FC3 applications processed within the 12 month service standard, 2007-2011

Year	%
2007	76.1%
2008	73.9%
2009	72.0%
2010	68.8%
2011	63.9%

Data source: DWS (FOSS / CAIPS / GCMS) as of October 22, 2013

Almost three-quarters of S&Ps in the focus groups had their applications finalized within the processing standard of one year, which is in line with the administrative and survey data. Most S&Ps felt that the wait had little impact on their lives other than uncertainty and the desire to get on with planning their lives, although financial costs of the wait were mentioned by several participants.

On average, PGPs in the focus groups reported waiting 45.7 months for their application decision, which aligns closely with administrative and survey data. All the PGP focus group participants felt that the process took too long and that the wait resulted in feelings of anxiety and uncertainty because of not being able to make plans for the future.

Perceptions on the timeliness of decisions

Many key informants who spoke about timeliness felt that decisions are timely, while some felt there are issues in this area. However, most respondents who felt there were issues with timeliness cited reasons that are out of the decision-makers control, such as inventories and workload.

The sponsor survey solicited opinions as to the timeliness of decision-making in the FRP. Not surprisingly, PGP sponsors were much less satisfied with the length of time the process took than were sponsors of relatives in the other two categories. Whereas 71% of S&P sponsors and

[46] The mean time to process an S&P file does not necessarily equate to the time it takes to process 80% of cases. In 2011, for example, it took 19 months to make a final decision on 80% of cases.

73% of Other FC sponsors were satisfied or very satisfied, 61% of PGP sponsors were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the length of time it took to process their application.

Visa offices were satisfied in general with the timeliness of their decision-making on FC Priority and FC4 cases. 78% of visa offices felt the timeliness of their decision-making on FC Priority cases was good or very good, and 73% felt this way about the timeliness of decision-making on PGP cases. In both cases visa offices noted that limited resources made it difficult to process applications in a more timely way.

Contextual issues that impact timeliness

Key informants noted several contextual issues that can impact the timeliness of decision-making. The most frequently mentioned issues dealt with the files themselves and the fact that more difficult files, by their nature, take longer to process. Respondents in the case studies reported that files that result in a negative decision usually take longer than those that result in a positive decision as time is added when interviews, field visits or document verifications take place.

Other issues that were mentioned included intake levels surpassing levels space and the resulting inventories, as well as the additional time that is added to a file as a result of medical exams – either when they expire and have to be resubmitted, or when applicants don't have them completed in a timely way. A few interviewees identified a lack of resources, particularly in smaller offices, as contributing to longer processing times. Interviewees in visa offices also noted that relying on other offices within the network can create pressures on the timeliness of decision-making.

Interviewees did note that some recent changes have improved timeliness of decision-making – completeness checking, risk-tiering, centralization and GCMS were all mentioned by a few respondents (although a few others said centralization and GCMS have had a negative impact on timeliness, at least in the short-term).

3.5. Program performance—program integrity

3.5.1. Program fraud and misuse

Finding #12: Attempted fraud and program misuse are perceived as being high, particularly in the spouse and partner category; however, available data is insufficient to assess the true nature and extent of fraud overall.

Concerns with program integrity, including attempted fraud and misuse of the Program by potential clients, are pervasive for all immigration programs. These concerns are magnified in the FRP where fraud can relate solely to the genuineness of the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored relative, which is very difficult to disprove, particularly in regions where fraudulent documents establishing a relationship are easily obtained.

The difficulty in proving fraud and the availability of fraudulent documents are two of the reasons that the true nature and extent of fraud cannot be established for the FRP. As well, there is no systematic, network-wide data captured by CIC on the incidence of suspected fraud, or tracking of the types of fraud seen at the various missions across the network. The evaluation also attempted to obtain data from CBSA on the number of cases referred for investigation, the

number of investigations conducted, and the number of removal orders issued on Family Class cases. However, CBSA organizes this data by IRPA allegation only, and does not track this information by immigration category. Therefore, it is not possible to know what proportion of all investigations and removals relate to a Family Class case. The general consensus among key informants in the evaluation was that the current extent of fraud and misuse in the FRP in not well known because there are no clear statistics.

Due to the limited availability of information related to fraud and misuse, the evaluation attempted to describe the nature and extent of these program integrity issues based on key informant interviews and responses to the CVOA survey. As well, it was possible to estimate the occurrence of two potential types of fraud using administrative data, in order to provide some indication of their frequency within the FRP.

Nature and extent of fraud in the S&P stream

The type of fraud within the Family Class that has received the most attention in recent years is marriages of convenience, which occurs when a fraudulent relationship is used for an individual to gain permanent residence in Canada. Marriages of convenience were identified as a priority by the Minister of CIC in 2012[47] following feedback from public consultations in 2010, which revealed strong support for measures and actions by the federal government to address relationships of convenience. Over three-quarters of respondents to the online consultations considered marriages of convenience to be a threat to the integrity of Canada's immigration system.[48]

The CVOA survey identified 5 main types of fraud in overseas FC files and on what proportion of cases these types of fraud were suspected.

- Marriage of convenience was the most frequently mentioned type of fraud, indicated as one of the main types by 78% of visa offices. It was also reported as problematic on the highest percentage of the overall FC caseload across missions, suspected in 16% of cases.
- Various types of document fraud were also reported as a main type of fraud by 41% of visa offices (occurring on 10% of their FC caseload).
- Both excluded dependants and misrepresentation of criminal past were described by 16% of visa offices, although not exclusively to the S&P category.

Consistent with the findings from the CVOA survey, marriage of convenience was cited by the majority of key informants when asked about the nature of fraud within the S&P component of the FRP. Other types of S&P program fraud and misuse were also raised by a few informants, including fraudulent documents (marriage or divorce certificates, or other supporting documents), failure to declare a spouse or child on the application, and sponsors falsely reporting that they meet the residency requirement for sponsorship.

Due to the fact that fraud, by its nature, is concealed, solid figures on the extent of bad faith relationships are not available; however, some key informants believed that the application refusal rate was a rough proxy for the amount of fraud that is detected in spouse and partner cases. As shown in Table 3-14, the refusal rate ranged from 16%-18% over the period of the evaluation

[47] News Release - "The Jig is Up on Marriage Fraud," Minister Kenney. www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/releases/2012/2012-10-26.asp

[48] www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/consultations/marriagefraud/index.asp

(2007-2011). Data on reasons for refusal of spouse and partner applications were available for the period from October 2010 to March 2012. Issues related to the relationship and its genuineness[49] were the main reason for refusal in 64% of cases (2355 of 3653) over this timeframe, which supports that suspected marriages of convenience account for most of the refusals.

Table 3-14: Number of applications refused (in persons) and refusal rate*, 2002-2012

Category	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Spouses & Partners	5,937	8,424	7,650	7,351	8,230	10,099	9,822	9,788	9,585	7,747	7,619
Children & Other Family Class	2,108	2,055	1,743	1,701	1,481	1,598	1,465	1,356	1,833	1,579	1,768
Parents and Grandparents	3,069	2,744	1,723	1,783	2,980	2,373	1,650	1,560	2,304	2,433	2,954
Family Class (Total)	**11,114**	**13,223**	**11,116**	**10,835**	**12,691**	**14,070**	**12,937**	**12,704**	**13,722**	**11,759**	**9,387**
Spouses & Partners	14.0%	15.0%	14.0%	13.0%	15.0%	18.0%	17.0%	18.0%	18.0%	16.0%	15.0%
Children & Other Family Class	23.0%	22.0%	25.0%	23.0%	22.0%	22.0%	24.0%	25.0%	30.0%	28.0%	33.0%
Parents and Grandparents	12.0%	12.0%	13.0%	9.0%	15.0%	13.0%	9.0%	8.0%	13.0%	14.0%	8.0%
Family Class (Total)	**15.0%**	**15.0%**	**15.0%**	**13.0%**	**15.0%**	**17.0%**	**16.0%**	**16.0%**	**18.0%**	**16.0%**	**14.0%**

**Refusal rate excludes withdrawn cases*

Source: OPMB data from open data file (PR-RP-post-eng) in intranet.

However, some informants also felt that CIC may not be identifying many instances of fraud. Marriages of convenience are extremely difficult to detect as immigration officers must rely on local knowledge of marriage laws and customs to flag potential fraud, and then conduct interviews with the clients, field visits, or checks on documents to make their assessment. Often, information is present that calls into question the genuineness of the relationship, but solid evidence of fraud is difficult to uncover. Therefore, it is possible that applications using a non-genuine relationship are approved.

Serial spousal sponsoring

There is some administrative data available on serial spousal sponsoring, which is one form of potential program fraud/misuse that can estimate the frequency of marriage of convenience. The data show that of all the sponsored spouses and partners who landed between 2002 and 2011, 6.3% (23,495/370,693) were sponsored by immigrants who had themselves entered Canada as a spouse (principal applicant). When we consider the years in which the re-sponsorship occurred, data indicate that 2.1% (7,638/370,693) of these S&P sponsorships were re-sponsorships that occurred within 3 years of the sponsor landing, which are the years most likely to indicate a marriage of convenience. As some of these remarriages would not have constituted fraud or misuse (the first marriage was genuine but broke down or the spouse died), 2.1% likely overestimates the true extent of misuse resulting from serial spousal sponsoring during this timeframe. While this information provides an estimate of serial spousal sponsoring that may indicate a MoC, it, like all other information on rates of fraud in the FRP, does not reflect the true nature of fraud in the Program.

[49] The regulations taken into account in the calculation were R4 (bad faith relationship), A11(1) (documented proof of relationship not provided), and A12(1) (relationship proven. Other refusal reasons could also imply a marriage of convenience, such as A40 (misrepresentation).

Nature and incidence of fraud/misuse in the PGP stream

Many key informants thought PGP fraud was rare, or at the very least, significantly lower than the level of fraud found in the S&P category. Fraud in the PGP stream was generally thought to involve overage dependants, fraudulent birth certificates or educational documents, and PGPs claiming a child that is not their own on their immigration application. On the sponsor side, PGP sponsors falsifying income when they did not meet the minimum necessary income requirement was mentioned by a few interviewees. Other types of fraud/misuse in this stream mentioned by a few respondents included hiding medical inadmissibility of an elderly relative, and "courier parents[50]" (this last category was mentioned only at NHQ).

The CVOA survey showed one main type of fraud that is specific to PGPs – the use of fraudulent student credentials for dependants. This type of fraud was reported by 41% of missions and was estimated to be present in about 11% of the files. As noted earlier, document fraud, excluded dependants and misrepresentation of criminal past were three other main types of fraud seen by visa offices and these could also be found in PGP cases.

Sponsor survey data can be used for a rough estimate of the incidence of courier parents. At the time of the survey, 6.5% of PGPs were no longer living in Canada. Of those who had left Canada, only 8 had arrived with dependents. That may imply a rate of 1.3% (8/621 PGP cases) of courier parents.

Finding #13: There are a variety of program integrity measures to combat fraud and these are used effectively by immigration officers; however, key informants reported that lack of resources limits their use.

Measures used to minimize fraud and misuse

There are a variety of measures that can be used by officers to identify fraud and misuse that were described by key informants and the document review. At missions, the most common measures are front-end scrutiny of applications by case analysts and other locally engaged staff[51], and second-level review of suspicious or complex cases by visa officers, which typically involves further scrutiny of the paper file and interviews with the applicant where there are questions about the genuineness of the relationship. The front-end review by case analysts and interviews with clients were assessed by key informants as being the most effective program integrity measure available to visa offices in the assessment of genuineness of relationships on FC files.

Other measures that are used within the Family Class to support the decision-making of officers and ensure program integrity include: document verification (usually with local authorities); DNA tests to verify the blood relationship of applicants; work by anti-fraud units/CBSA liaison officers, which includes document verification and site visits to further verify information provided on the application, and investigation of organized fraud overseas; local QA exercises[52]; and telephone verification with clients.

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[50] "Courier parents" are PGPs who use the FRP to bring their children into Canada with no intention to remain as permanent residents themselves – they land in Canada with their dependants, help them settle then return to their home countries to live.

[51] LES conduct paper screening of files that involves checking the information stated on the application and ensuring the supporting documents are genuine and sufficient.

[52] To date, the network-wide QA exercises have focused on consistency and defensibility of decision-making, as opposed to level of program fraud or misuse. For example, the QA exercise conducted on FC4 risk triaging looked

The CVOA survey included questions to establish the frequency of use of some of these aforementioned measures. The results in Table 3-15 show that interviews are used as the primary program integrity measure on FC Priority cases. As noted above, many key informants reported that client interviews are one of the most effective tools at uncovering fraud. The table also shows that visa officers use far fewer program integrity measures on FC4 cases than FC Priority cases, which is consistent with assessments that attempted fraud is lower in these cases.

Table 3-15: Estimated proportion of 2012 FC caseload on which program integrity measures were used

Survey question: In approximately what proportion of your 2012 FC caseload did you use the following program integrity measures?

Integrity Measure	Mean	Range	N
FC Priority Cases			
Document verification	5.6%	0-25%	29
Interviews	18.7%	3-40%	32
Site visits	0.9%	0-10%	29
DNA testing	2.9%	0-20%	31
FC4 Cases			
Document verification	3.9%	0-25%	27
Interviews	3.1%	0-10%	30
Site visits	0.3%	0-5%	29
DNA testing	2.8%	0-20%	30

Source: CVOA survey

The CVOA survey also showed that just over half of visa offices (53%) conduct quality assurance (QA) exercises on their FC caseload. Offices that carried out these exercises conducted an average of 3.0 over the past five years, with a range from 1 to 15 exercises. Of the 32 offices returning the survey, 15 had not conducted a QA exercise related to FC in the last 5 years[53] and 10 had conducted only one. As each mission is required to conduct a minimum of two QA exercises every year, it is likely that permanent resident economic programs or temporary programs were prioritized for QA exercises over FC in these cases.

Of the five program integrity measures examined in the survey (document verification, interviews, site visits, DNA testing and QA exercises), visa offices used 3.4 on average for FCP and 2.4 for FC4. Again, this is consistent with the visa offices assessment of the potential for fraud on these cases – where higher rates of fraud are suspected, more program integrity measures are used. As well, four of the five visa offices with the highest volumes of FC cases used all five measures to identify fraud on their caseload, while the other used four of these measures.

at whether the indicators of fraud were consistently applied, but not at whether they were the best indicators for identifying fraud.

[53] The network-wide QA exercises conducted by OMC were not included in these counts.

The expectation of fraud in visa offices seems to affect the frequency of use of particular program integrity measures[54]. As the incidence of marriages of convenience rises, so does the probability of doing interviews and verifying documents. As the incidence of fraudulent documents increases, so does the likelihood of site visits and interviews for the FCP caseload. On the PGP side, more fraudulent documents corresponded with increased use of DNA tests.

Many informants felt that, when considered together, the program integrity measures currently in place are appropriate and generally effective at addressing integrity issues in the Program. In addition to the program integrity measures described above, there have been several recent changes to the FRP that are intended to reduce fraud or misuse in the Program. Two amendments to the IRPA Regulations were introduced in 2012 to address fraud in the S&P component. The regulation on *conditional permanent residence* specified that a sponsored spouse or partner must cohabit in a conjugal relationship with their sponsor for a period of two years following receipt of their permanent resident status. The *5-year Sponsorship Bar* restricts a previously-sponsored spouse or partner from sponsoring a new spouse or partner within five years of becoming a permanent resident. As these measures were only recently implemented, data is not available to assess their effectiveness at reducing program fraud and misuse.

Impediments to addressing fraud/misuse

Many key informants reported that the primary barrier to addressing fraud and misuse in the program is a lack of resources. Interviewees identified this impediment as having a direct effect on the number of interviews and site visits that could be conducted, which are necessary for uncovering fraud in the FRP.

3.5.2. Negative impacts on program integrity

Finding #14: CIC informants identified a variety of issues that they believe can negatively impact program integrity.

Appeals at the IAD

Key informants were asked about their views on the appeals process. Although they felt appeals are necessary to ensure the most appropriate decisions are being made, many felt that there are major flaws with the structure of the appeals system at the IAD and had concerns regarding its impact on the FRP's program integrity. The most frequently identified issue was reported earlier in section 3.4.2 related to the use of de novo information at the time of the appeal. These informants felt that since a lot of time elapses between the original decision and the appeal, a large amount of new information is presented at the IAD hearing, which is then used to overcome officer decisions that were made prior to the existence of the new information. In fact, some informants felt that many clients, or their representatives, are well-informed of the appeals process and use this knowledge and the time available to them to amass information, which informants suspect is fabricated or created for the purposes of winning the appeal in some cases.

Also as previously mentioned, some key informants pointed out that IAD hearings generally include only the sponsor, whereas officers at the time of assessment interact with the applicant, which means the IAD is ultimately reviewing a different set of facts from that which was presented to and assessed by the visa officer. Compounding the ability of the IAD to make

[54] Correlations of .44, .38, .68, .50 and .40 respectively.

informed decisions, a few informants felt that IAD members do not have sufficient awareness of local conditions and cultures in other countries or experience in assessing trends in fraud.

The CVOA survey uncovered these same issues with the appeals process, which have the potential to negatively impact the integrity of the Program. Seventy-two percent of offices reported concerns with the way the appeal process operates, including the use of *de novo* information at the time of appeal (48% mentioned this); the IAD lacks knowledge of IRPA and/or local conditions (29%); H&C is used too frequently by IAD members (29%); the IAD hears the appeal from and interviews the sponsor, while the visa officer interviews and assesses the applicant (19%); and decisions of the IAD members are not explained (14%).

It is not possible to know the extent to which the IAD appeal process hinders program integrity; however, data on marriage breakdown of FC immigrants can provide some useful insight into potential marriages of convenience seen by the IAD. A comparison of the divorce/separation rates of appealed and non-appealed cases after landing in Canada is shown in Table 3-16 below. It can be seen that the rates of separation/divorce are substantially higher for those cases that went to appeal at the IAD – the divorce/separation rate for these cases exceeds 40% at year 5, while the cases that did not go to appeal reach only 35% after 10 years. While this difference could be due to factors unrelated to fraud, the higher proportion of marriage breakdown among appeal cases is concerning and warrants further review to determine the extent to which non-genuine relationships are being allowed on appeal at the IAD.

Table 3-16: Separation/divorce rate of spouses and partners, by appeal process involvement and years since landing, landing years 2000-2010

	Years Since Landing										
Type of cases	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Appeal cases											
Rate of separation or divorce	12.3%	24.9%	32.0%	35.5%	38.3%	41.1%	42.0%	42.6%	44.8%	43.9%	45.4%
Total count	14,755	14,770	12,785	11,045	9,165	7,250	5,595	3,945	2,725	1,680	730
Non-appeal cases											
Rate of separation or divorce	7.3%	14.1%	18.5%	22.1%	24.6%	26.6%	28.3%	30.3%	33.3%	35.0%	35.9%
Total count	309,450	309,240	276,995	243,475	209,625	176,065	142,040	109,440	80,325	55,715	27,115
Rate of separation or divorce	**7.5%**	**14.5%**	**19.1%**	**22.7%**	**25.2%**	**27.2%**	**28.8%**	**30.8%**	**33.7%**	**35.3%**	**36.2%**
Total number of S&P	**324,205**	**324,010**	**289,780**	**254,520**	**218,790**	**183,310**	**147,635**	**113,385**	**83,050**	**57,395**	**27,845**

**Because there is no Canadian benchmark, we have developed the divorced or separated rate which is a relative measure that compares diverse groups to others. This measure shows differences between groups and changes over time.*

Source: IMDB 2010

Inland enforcement

A second area that was raised by case study informants as having a negative impact on program integrity was the lack of inland enforcement of regulations on approved FC cases where it is later determined that fraud and misuse may have occurred. As previously noted, many interviewees believed that CIC was not identifying many instances of fraud, which implies non-genuine members of the Family Class are being admitted to Canada. There are a variety of inland program integrity measures which are intended to address these cases; however, key informants noted deficiencies with these measures.

For example, there are a variety of circumstances under which a Family Class immigrant may be subject to removal from Canada, such as issues of criminality or misrepresentation. In these cases, an A44 report is completed and investigation may be conducted by CBSA. However, as noted earlier, CIC has no mechanism to track the number of investigations and removals of immigrants in the Family Class.

In addition, one of the grounds for determining a family member to be inadmissible to Canada is a serious health problem that will burden the Canadian health care system. These family members aren't necessarily excluded from Canada, however, and sponsored relatives are able to produce a mitigation plan, which shows how the applicant and sponsor will mitigate the potential health care-related costs to the taxpayer, to bring the costs below the established threshold for excessive demand. If the visa officer is satisfied with this plan, they may waive inadmissibility. However, as health care in Canada is within provincial-territorial jurisdiction, the federal government does not have a role in its legislation and there is currently no follow-up mechanism in place to track the implementation of these mitigation plans.

As well, some key informants reported that there are no real consequences for sponsors who default on their undertaking but do not plan to sponsor again in the future (for these sponsors, the sponsorship bar for those who have been in default does not serve as a deterrent).

Finally, many key informants spoke about the new 2-year conditional permanent residence requirement (CPR), which requires some sponsored spouses and partners to cohabit with their sponsor for two years after receiving permanent residence.[55] This initiative was put in place as a way to potentially deter marriages of convenience. Some interviewees felt that this new initiative should improve program integrity once it has been in place long enough. However, key informants also believed that enforcement of the CPR will be difficult and interviewees from CBSA confirmed this, reporting that resources to conduct investigations and enforce it are limited.

3.5.3. Program integrity and results of appeals

Finding #15: Data show that the consistency between visa officer and IAD decisions may be improving as the proportion of visa officer decisions that have been overturned by the IAD has been steadily decreasing over time.

Number and proportion of negative decisions appealed

Table 3-17 provides information on the proportion of FC files that are refused at visa offices and later appealed, as well as the final outcome of those appeals.[56] Between 2007 and 2011, there were 44,448 applications that were refused by visa officers. During the same timeframe, 25,060 appeals were filed on FC cases, with the number of appeals generally declining over the five-year period from 5,636 in 2007 to 4,534 in 2011. As well, the proportion of refused applications that resulted in a positive decision for the sponsor and their relative (the original decision of the visa officer was overturned) at the IAD also decreased each year from 24.6% in 2007 to 12.3% in 2011. Therefore, not only have fewer and fewer application decisions been appealed over time, but

[55] Only those who have not been together for two years or more (and have no children in common) at time of sponsorship application will receive conditional PR.

[56] Note that the appeal may not be filed in the same year as the refusal was made so the numbers don't necessarily reflect the same files in each category.

fewer and fewer of these appeals result in the original decision being overturned, which indicates improved consistency between decision-making of visa officers and IAD members.

Table 3-17: Number of appeals filed and refused applications (cases), 2007–2011*

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Applications refused by VO (cases)	**9,248**	**8,832**	**8,751**	**9,467**	**8,150**	**44,448**
Appeals filed	**5,522**	**4,891**	**4,871**	**4,778**	**4,319**	**24,381**
Proportion of refused applications appealed	**59.7%**	**55.4%**	**55.7%**	**50.5%**	**53.0%**	**54.9%**
Appeal allowed, consent, H&C	2,273	1,872	1,771	1,499	1,001	8,416
Appeal results in negative decision	3,249	3,019	3,100	3,279	3,318	15,965
Proportion of cases refused by VO allowed by IAD	24.6%	21.2%	20.2%	15.8%	12.3%	18.9%
Proportion of cases refused by VO results in negative decision	35.1%	34.2%	35.4%	34.6%	40.7%	35.9%
Proportion of cases refused by VO that were not appealed	40.3%	44.6%	44.3%	49.5%	47.0%	45.1%

**Appeal may not be filed the same year as the application refusal.*

Source: App. Refused (decision year) from PR-RP-post_eng data report; Appeals filed (filing year) from RDM data load

Results of appeals

The results of IAD appeals (finalized cases) are shown in the table below. Up until 2009 over 40% of appeals were allowed by the IAD or consented to by CIC.[57] This proportion fell to 38% in 2010 and 34% in 2011 (mainly due to a falling consent rate). The most recent data for 2012 show that this trend has continued with 34% of appeals being allowed by the IAD or consented to by CIC. The dismissal rate has also been consistent for 2011 and 2012 at just over 31%. This supports the earlier finding that consistency in decision-making between visa officers and the IAD may be improving.

Table 3-18: Number of sponsorship appeals by finalized status, 2007-2012

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total	2012
Allowed (consent)	2,235	1,964	1,998	1,857	1,632	**9,686**	1,437
Withdrawn	1,214	1,405	1,387	1,398	1,307	**6,711**	1,142
Dismissed	1,333	1,119	1,137	1,334	1,501	**6,424**	1,326
Abandoned	244	248	333	322	313	**1,460**	281
Administrative (no show /document)	21	19	24	29	41	**134**	32
Total Finalized	**5,047**	**4,755**	**4,879**	**4,940**	**4,794**	**24,415**	**4,218**
Allowed (consent)	44.3%	41.3%	41.0%	37.6%	34.0%	**39.7%**	34.1%
Withdrawn	24.1%	29.5%	28.4%	28.3%	27.3%	**27.5%**	27.1%
Dismissed	26.4%	23.5%	23.3%	27.0%	31.3%	**26.3%**	31.4%
Abandoned	4.8%	5.2%	6.8%	6.5%	6.5%	**6.0%**	6.7%
Administrative (no show /document)	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	0.9%	**0.5%**	0.8%
Total Finalized	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Source: Appeal data compiled by IAD

[57] CBSA Hearings Officers represent CIC at appeal hearings and consent to appeals on behalf of CIC.

3.6. Program performance—final outcomes

3.6.1. Family reunification

Finding #16: The Family Reunification Program has been successful at landing sponsored relatives and family members are remaining in close proximity to their sponsors once in Canada.

The primary objective of the FRP is to reunite families in Canada and, given that approximately 60,000 FC relatives are landed annually, CIC is effectively doing this. At the same time, however, the total number of FC landings declined in each year between 2007 and 2011, for a total decrease of 14.8% over this period. (See Table 1-4) so we have been reunifying fewer families. With the exception of 2010, the number of landed immigrants in the Family Class did not meet the low end of the planned levels range (see Table 1-5). As well, the share of Family Class as a proportion of all permanent residents declined each year from 2007-2010 (from 28% to 21.5%) and rebounded slightly in 2011 when the share of FC reached 22.7%.[58]

Data from the sponsor survey supports the finding that families are being reunited; it shows that 96% of all sponsored relatives lived in the same home as their sponsor upon landing in Canada. Not unexpectedly, the percentages were highest for relatives in the children and others category (97%) and the S&P category (97%). A large majority of PGPs also lived in the same home as their sponsor upon landing (94%).

Over time, these numbers dropped somewhat; however, this trend is expected considering the nature of these relationships. Figure 3-1 shows the percentage of sponsors who reported living with their sponsored relatives after one, three and five years, respectively[59]. After 5 years, 89% of S&P[60] were still living in the same home as their sponsor, as were 79% of sponsored relatives in the children and others category, and 69% of PGPs. It is expected that children and others will move out of the sponsor's home as they grow older and that PGPs will move into their own residence as they become established in Canada.

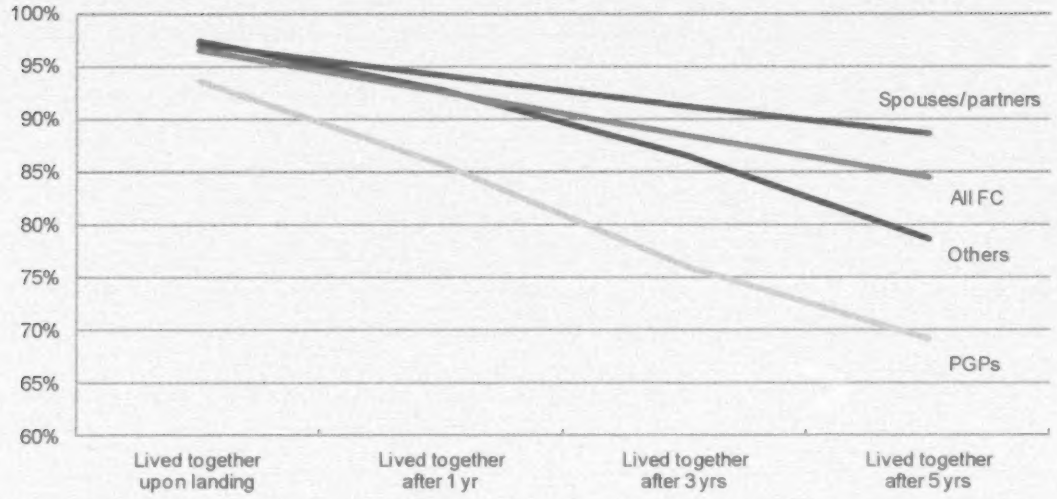
To further support the finding that the Program is successful at reuniting families, almost all of the remaining sponsored family members who did not live with their sponsor resided in the same province as their sponsor. As well, at the time of the sponsor survey, the number of sponsored relatives reported to have left Canada was very low – under 1% of sponsored S&Ps, 3% of sponsored children and others, and 6.5% of PGPs. These percentages represent sponsored relatives captured by the sponsor survey who had landed between 2007 and 2011.

[58] More recent data from 2012 show that the increase in S&P applications in 2011 resulted in a higher number of S&P landings in 2012. This, combined with the increase in processing and subsequent landings of PGP applicants, has resulted in an increase in the share of FC as a proportion of all permanent residents to 25.2%.

[59] The number of respondents changes according to the length of time since their sponsored relative landed (N at 1 YSL is 1649, N at 3 YSL is 1050 and N at 5 YSL is 320).

[60] The survey results may somewhat overestimate the proportion of spouses and partners living together if individuals in a failed relationship or a marriage of convenience were less likely to complete the survey.

Figure 3-1: Proportion of sponsors living with sponsored relatives



Source: Sponsor survey

These results were confirmed by focus group participants. All S&P focus group participants had lived with their sponsor upon arriving in Canada and only one subsequently moved out. As well, half of the PGP focus group attendees lived with their sponsor and the remainder were living in the same city or province. As well, all sponsored relatives who took part in the focus groups reported that they plan to stay in Canada so they could live near their family and because they wanted the stability, safety and living standard that Canada offers.

As well, following the pause on PGP applications in November 2011, the Super Visa Program was launched, allowing PGPs to enter Canada on a temporary basis, in order to be reunited with their family members quickly while the inventory of PGP applications was being processed. One year after the launch of the Super Visa Program, approximately 13,000 visas had been issued, with an acceptance rate of 87%.

3.6.2. Economic outcomes of sponsored relatives

Tables 3-19, 3-20 and 3-21 provide information on the economic outcomes of immigrants in the Family Class, which have been separated into three categories – Spouses and Partners, Parents and Grandparents, and Other FC. Information on spouses of economic immigrants is also included for comparative purposes, as is an "all immigrants" category, which represents all classes of permanent immigrants to Canada[61], including Family Class. The data in these tables is taken from the IMDB[62], which is a tax filer database, and therefore only represents those individuals who are filing taxes. It is noteworthy that individuals are not able to claim social assistance or employment insurance if they do not file income taxes so the data presented on employment insurance and social assistance are complete.

[61] The all immigrants category includes all principal applicants and their spouses and dependants in all Economic, Family Class, Refugee and Other permanent immigration classes.

[62] To provide context for the report, for tax year 2010, the IMDB included information on over 75% of Family Class immigrants who had been in Canada for one year, over 77% who had been in Canada for 5 years and over 73% for those living in Canada for 10 years.

Finding #17: Close to 7 in 10 sponsored spouses and partners are reporting employment earnings in each of their first 8 years in Canada and they fare better economically than spouses of economic immigrants, with the exception of higher rates of employment insurance usage.

Economic outcomes of spouses and partners

Table 3-19 shows that the proportion of S&P immigrants reporting employment earnings is higher than, or on par with, the all-immigrant average. The proportion of S&Ps reporting employment earnings is highest (69%) at one year since landing (YSL) and decreases slightly each year to 66% at 8 YSL. However, the proportion of S&Ps reporting self-employment earnings increases over these same years at a higher rate (from 10% at 1 YSL to 15% at 8 YSL). S&Ps, on average, also report self-employment earnings at a higher rate than all immigrants.

Table 3-19: Employment and self-employment earnings participation for cohorts landed between 2002-2009, by years since landing and immigration category

YSL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
% with employment earnings								
Spouses and Partners	69.4%	69.0%	68.8%	68.0%	67.3%	66.5%	66.1%	65.5%
Parents and Grandparents	49.1%	49.5%	49.3%	48.6%	48.0%	45.2%	43.9%	42.6%
Children and other FC	82.2%	84.0%	83.8%	84.0%	83.1%	81.8%	80.6%	79.8%
Economic - s.d.	59.5%	61.7%	63.6%	64.5%	65.1%	65.5%	64.9%	65.2%
All immigrants	66.3%	67.1%	67.9%	67.8%	67.7%	66.8%	65.7%	65.1%
% with self-employment earnings								
Spouses and Partners	10.0%	11.8%	13.1%	13.9%	14.3%	14.3%	14.7%	15.3%
Parents and Grandparents	7.9%	9.0%	10.0%	11.3%	12.2%	12.4%	13.1%	13.3%
Children and other FC	5.9%	5.9%	7.1%	7.9%	8.6%	8.9%	9.4%	8.3%
Economic - s.d.	6.7%	8.2%	9.3%	10.2%	10.8%	11.5%	11.7%	11.7%
All immigrants	9.1%	10.8%	12.1%	13.1%	13.6%	14.0%	14.3%	14.5%

Source: IMDB cube 2010

When compared to spouses of economic immigrants, S&Ps compare favourably with a higher initial incidence of employment earnings in years 1 to 5 (see Table 3-19). By year 6 in Canada the two groups have relatively equal incidences of employment, however, S&Ps have higher average earnings. As Table 3-20 shows, S&Ps earned, on average, $20,434 at one year since landing (YSL) and $30,305 by 8 YSL whereas spouses of economic immigrants earned $16,297 and $27,149 respectively. Although both categories showed an increase in average employment earnings in each year, earned income amounts were higher for S&Ps in all years that comprised the analysis.

Table 3-20: Employment earnings for cohorts landed between 2002-2009, by years since landing and immigration category

Employment earnings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Spouses and Partners	$20,434	$23,053	$24,874	$26,442	$27,761	$28,821	$29,504	$30,305
Parents and Grandparents	$14,036	$15,404	$16,242	$17,208	$17,995	$18,881	$19,250	$19,982
Children and other FC	$12,221	$13,942	$15,256	$16,316	$17,706	$18,704	$19,232	$19,793
Economic - s.d.	$16,297	$18,419	$20,052	$21,765	$23,336	$25,049	$26,112	$27,149
All immigrants	$22,686	$25,398	$27,392	$29,352	$31,250	$33,057	$33,998	$35,317

Source: IMDB cube 2010

As shown in Table 3-21, S&Ps are the most likely category to report earnings from Employment Insurance (EI), while spouses of economic immigrants are least likely. The proportion of S&Ps reporting EI earnings jumps in the second year since landing (from 10% at 1 YSL to 17% at 2 YSL), then seems to stabilize. Increases at 2 YSL are noted for the other categories as well, although they are not as significant. However, it is noteworthy that to be eligible for EI, one must first be working. Therefore, the high incidence of employment for S&Ps makes it more likely they will report earnings from EI.

Table 3-21: Employment insurance participation for cohorts landed between 2002-2009, by years since landing and immigration category

% with employment insurance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Spouses and Partners	10.2%	17.1%	17.5%	17.6%	17.5%	17.5%	17.6%	15.9%
Parents and Grandparents	7.5%	10.7%	12.1%	12.6%	12.4%	12.0%	13.6%	13.7%
Children and other FC	3.2%	6.6%	8.7%	10.3%	11.8%	13.3%	15.1%	14.1%
Economic - s.d.	5.1%	9.1%	10.2%	10.4%	10.3%	10.1%	10.0%	9.0%
All immigrants	7.8%	12.3%	13.2%	13.5%	13.6%	13.6%	13.9%	12.6%

Source: IMDB cube 2010

Finding #18: Economic outcomes of parents and grandparents are well below the average of all immigrants, with fewer than half reporting employment income, low average earnings and increased employment insurance usage over time.

Economic outcomes of PGPs

As Table 3-19 shows, PGPs are the least likely of all categories in the analysis to report employment earnings. At 1 YSL, 49% of PGPs report employment income and this proportion declines over time, with 43% reporting employment earnings after 8 years in Canada. However, a larger proportion of PGPs report self-employment earnings than either spouses of economic immigrants or the Other FC category. At 1 YSL, 8% of PGPs report self-employment earnings and this number increases steadily to 13% after 8 years in Canada. With regard to earnings, PGPs earned, on average, $14,036 after one year in Canada and $19,982 after 8 years in Canada. They had the lowest overall increase in earnings of all categories. However, these economic outcomes are expected due to the average age of these immigrants at landing.

PGPs have lower incidences of earnings from Employment Insurance compared to all immigrants (with the exception of 8 YSL), due to their lower incidence of reported employment earnings. However, the proportion of PGPs reporting EI increases over time in Canada, from 8% at 1 YSL to 14% at 8 YSL.

Finding #19: A high proportion of Other Family Class immigrants report employment income; however, they have the lowest earnings and the largest increase in EI usage over time in Canada. This is likely due to the young average age of these immigrants.

Economic outcomes of Other FC

As shown in Table 1-12, the majority of individuals in the FC category are between 0-14 years of age and most of the remainder are between 15-24 years of age. Therefore, a large proportion of Other FC will not be captured in the IMDB as they will not be filing taxes. Those who are included have a very young average age and their economic outcomes are expected to reflect that.

The Other FC category has the highest incidence of employment earnings of all categories that comprised the analysis – between 80% and 84% in each year since landing (see Table 3-19). However, they also had the lowest incidence of self-employment earnings of all categories and the lowest earnings of all categories in the analysis, earning $12,221 after 1 YSL and $19,793 on average, after 8 years in Canada.

The Other FC category shows the largest increase in reported EI use over time in Canada, from 3% after one year in Canada to 14% at 8 YSL. Again, EI usage is predicated on having worked prior, therefore higher rates of EI usage are expected.

Finding #20: Family class immigrants have a disproportionately high rate of reporting social assistance when compared to all immigrants, which can be attributed primarily to PGPs.

Social assistance

In order to show the overall prevalence of social assistance use by family Class immigrants, this section provides information on all social assistance use of FC immigrants, regardless of whether they are in a period of undertaking. As shown in Table 3-22, all FC categories (S&P, PGPs and other FC) show an increase in reported social assistance (SA) usage over time, up to 8 YSL. The reverse trend is observed for all immigrants and, to a lesser extent, for spouses of economic immigrants, where a steady decline in SA usage is reported until the 7th year in Canada.

The increase in reported SA usage by FC immigrants over time is least severe for the S&P category. As well, for each YSL, the proportion of S&Ps reporting SA usage is lower than that of all immigrants. The Other FC category shows the largest increase in reported SA usage from 6% after 1 year in Canada to 12% 8 years after landing.

Table 3-22: Social assistance participation for cohorts landed between 2002-2009, by years since landing and immigration category

% with social assistance	1	2	3	4	6	6	7	8
Spouses and Partners	4.0%	4.3%	4.7%	5.2%	5.4%	5.5%	5.4%	6.1%
Parents and Grandparents	3.3%	4.0%	4.6%	5.3%	5.9%	6.9%	7.3%	7.9%
Children and other FC	6.2%	6.5%	7.0%	7.7%	8.6%	9.9%	11.2%	11.9%
Economic - s.d.	8.3%	6.6%	5.3%	4.4%	3.9%	3.6%	3.5%	3.6%
All immigrants	11.9%	10.2%	9.2%	8.5%	8.0%	7.8%	7.5%	7.7%

Source: IMDB cube 2010

Table 3-23 provides detailed information on the numbers of people within the Family class who are in receipt of social assistance for tax years 2002-2010 (the most recent year for which data is available) as well as the total number of immigrants from all permanent resident categories that were in receipt of SA for the same years. This table, combined with the landing data provided in Table 1-4, shows that while FC immigrants represented only 26% of all landings between 2002 and 2010, on average, they represented 40% of all immigrants accessing SA over the same timeframe. As well, while PGPs represented a small proportion of FC immigrants overall (26%), they represented over half of the FC immigrants on SA (59%, on average, from 2002-2010). PGPs also represented almost a quarter (24%) of all immigrants on SA, on average, for this timeframe.

Table 3-23: Social assistance participation, all cohorts included, taxation years 2002-2010

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Avg. 02-10
Spouses and Partners	33,615	33,060	34,105	34,190	35,060	36,375	41,760	45,325	49,240	38,081
Parents and Grandparents	68,990	66,380	69,630	72,635	74,610	76,280	76,075	77,940	80,790	73,703
Other - Family class	11,165	11,165	11,715	11,870	12,005	12,270	13,320	14,150	15,450	12,568
Family class - Num Wt Social Assistance	**113,760**	**110,595**	**115,465**	**118,680**	**121,665**	**124,915**	**131,175**	**137,420**	**145,490**	**124,352**
All immigrants - Num Wt Social Assistance	**274,800**	**272,990**	**283,105**	**291,210**	**301,275**	**311,150**	**335,745**	**352,765**	**380,090**	**311,459**
Spouses and Partners	12.2%	12.1%	12.0%	11.7%	11.6%	11.7%	12.4%	12.8%	13.0%	12.2%
Parents and Grandparents	25.1%	24.3%	24.6%	24.9%	24.8%	24.5%	22.7%	22.1%	21.3%	23.7%
Other - Family class	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.0%	3.9%	4.0%	4.0%	4.1%	4.0%
Family class - Percent of all immigrants	**41.4%**	**40.5%**	**40.8%**	**40.8%**	**40.4%**	**40.1%**	**39.1%**	**39.0%**	**38.3%**	**39.9%**
All immigrants	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Source: IMDB cube 2010

3.6.3. Undue costs of FRP

Finding #21: Some Family Class immigrants are accessing social assistance during the period of undertaking, although data suggest that more recently selected Family Class immigrants use social assistance less often than earlier cohorts.

Finding #22: The sponsorship undertaking is somewhat effective at controlling use of social assistance for parents and grandparents, while spouses and partners' use of social assistance appears to be influenced by other factors.

Use of social assistance during the period of undertaking

Within the context of the Family Reunification Program, *undue costs* specifically describe the costs that are incurred when a sponsored relative was in receipt of social assistance during the period of sponsorship undertaking (also described as the sponsor being in "default"). IMDB tax data can illustrate the prevalence of social assistance claims by individuals who are still within the period of undertaking (3 years for spouses and partners and 10 years for parents and grandparents).[63] Table 3-24 and Table 3-25 provide information on the proportion of immigrants in each category who are in receipt of SA, organized by YSL and tax year.

As Table 3-24 and Figure 3-2 demonstrate, for S&Ps landed between 2002 and 2009, the use of social assistance during the period of undertaking was between 3.6% and 5.1%. This is much lower than for those S&Ps who landed in the previous 6-year period (1996-2001), where the default rates were between 5.2% and 10.4%. The data also show that the proportion of S&P on SA is stable across years for those who landed between 2002 and 2009 (there is no increase following the period of undertaking). However, for those who landed between 1996 and 2001, the use of SA actually decreased following the period of undertaking. The shift in behaviour of the earlier versus the more recent landing cohorts indicates that the reliance on SA is likely influenced by factors in addition to the undertaking, such as the economic climate, program changes resulting from the implementation of IRPA, or the criteria used to select S&P immigrants.

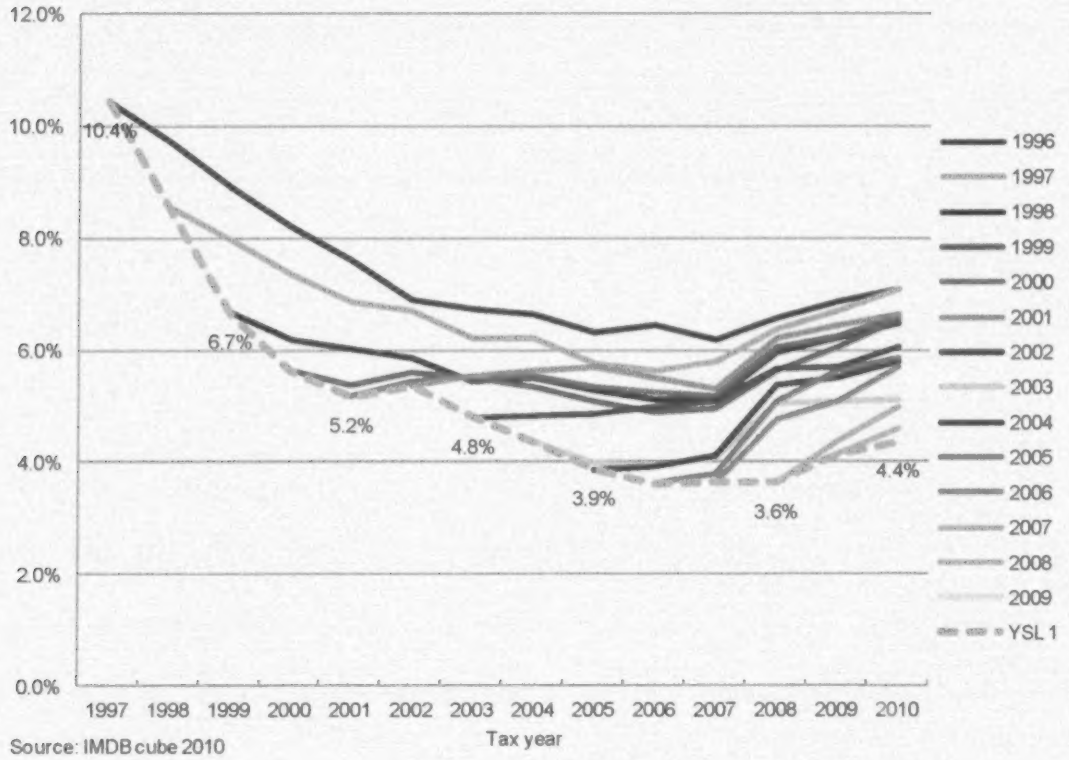
[63] Due to varying lengths in the undertaking for the Other FC category, default rates could not be calculated for this group.

Table 3-24: Spouse and partner - % of social assistance by years since landing, immigrant landing years 1996-2009

YSL	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	10.4%	8.5%	6.7%	5.6%	5.2%	5.4%	4.8%	4.4%	3.9%	3.6%	0.036	0.036	0.041	0.044
2	9.7%	8.0%	6.2%	5.4%	5.4%	5.5%	4.8%	4.0%	3.9%	3.8%	0.048	0.044	0.046	
3	8.9%	7.4%	6.0%	5.6%	5.6%	5.6%	4.8%	3.9%	4.1%	5.1%	0.051	0.05		
4	8.2%	6.9%	5.9%	5.5%	5.5%	5.7%	5.0%	4.1%	5.4%	5.6%	0.057			
5	7.6%	6.7%	5.5%	5.3%	5.4%	5.5%	5.1%	5.1%	5.5%	5.9%				
6	6.9%	6.2%	5.5%	5.1%	5.2%	5.3%	5.7%	5.1%	5.8%					
7	6.7%	6.2%	5.3%	4.9%	5.2%	6.2%	5.7%	5.1%						
8	6.6%	5.8%	5.1%	5.0%	6.0%	6.4%	6.1%							
9	6.3%	5.6%	5.1%	5.6%	6.2%	6.7%								
10	6.5%	5.8%	6.0%	6.1%	6.6%									
11	6.2%	6.4%	6.2%	6.5%										
12	6.6%	6.7%	6.5%											
13	6.9%	7.1%												
14	7.1%													
Total	**7.6%**	**6.8%**	**5.9%**	**5.5%**	**5.5%**	**5.7%**	**5.1%**	**4.4%**	**4.5%**	**4.5%**	**4.4%**	**3.9%**	**3.9%**	**3.8%**

Source: IMDB cube 2010

Figure 3-2: Percentage of SA, S&P, Landing years, 1996-2009



Source: IMDB cube 2010

Table 3-25 and Figure 3-3 show that for PGPs landed between 2002 and 2009, use of SA was between 2.7% and 3.9% at 1 YSL. This is lower than for PGPs who landed between 1996 and 2001, where SA use was between 3.9% and 7.7% at 1 YSL, which is consistent with the S&P data – more recently selected FC immigrants are less likely to use SA than those who landed between 1996 and 2001. However, unlike the S&P default rates, which were relatively steady over time for the more recent cohorts, the default rate for the PGP category climbed steadily during each year of the undertaking, to between 9% and 11.8% at 9 years since landing, although certain conditions probably played a role for PGPs use of SA such as limited access to the labour market and no access to OAS or GIS.

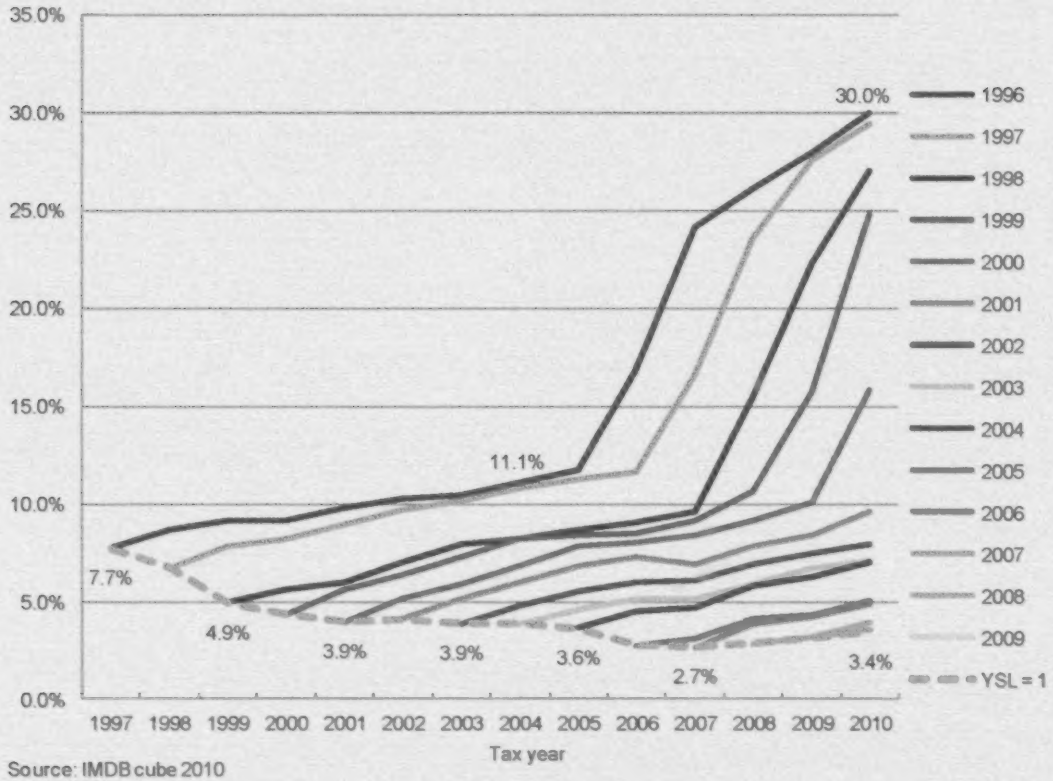
Looking at longer trends, Table 3-25 shows that the undertaking appears to have had an important containment effect for the PGP cohorts in the 1990s, as a huge jump in SA use occurs following the expiration of the undertaking. After 11 years in Canada, more than one PGP out of four is accessing SA.

Table 3-25: PGP - % of social assistance by years since landing (all ages), immigrant landing years 1996-2009

YSL	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1	7.7%	6.7%	4.9%	4.3%	3.9%	4.1%	3.9%	3.9%	3.6%	2.7%	0.027	0.029	0.032	0.034
2	8.7%	7.8%	5.6%	5.6%	5.2%	5.1%	4.8%	4.6%	4.5%	3.1%	0.038	0.032	0.039	
3	9.1%	8.2%	6.0%	6.4%	5.9%	6.0%	5.5%	5.1%	4.7%	4.1%	0.042	0.036		
4	9.2%	8.9%	7.0%	7.2%	6.8%	6.8%	6.0%	5.2%	5.8%	4.3%	0.048			
5	9.8%	9.7%	7.9%	8.2%	7.8%	7.2%	6.1%	5.9%	6.2%	5.0%				
6	10.2%	10.1%	8.2%	8.4%	8.0%	6.9%	7.0%	6.7%	7.0%					
7	10.5%	10.8%	8.7%	8.5%	8.4%	7.8%	7.5%	7.1%						
8	11.1%	11.2%	9.0%	9.1%	9.2%	8.4%	7.9%							
9	11.8%	11.6%	9.6%	10.6%	10.1%	9.6%								
10	16.8%	16.7%	15.4%	15.7%	15.8%									
11	24.2%	23.6%	22.3%	24.8%										
12	26.1%	27.6%	27.0%											
13	28.0%	29.5%												
14	30.0%													
Total	**14.4%**	**13.2%**	**10.2%**	**9.2%**	**7.5%**	**6.4%**	**5.6%**	**5.1%**	**4.9%**	**3.5%**	**3.5%**	**2.7%**	**2.8%**	**2.6%**

Source: IMDB cube 2010

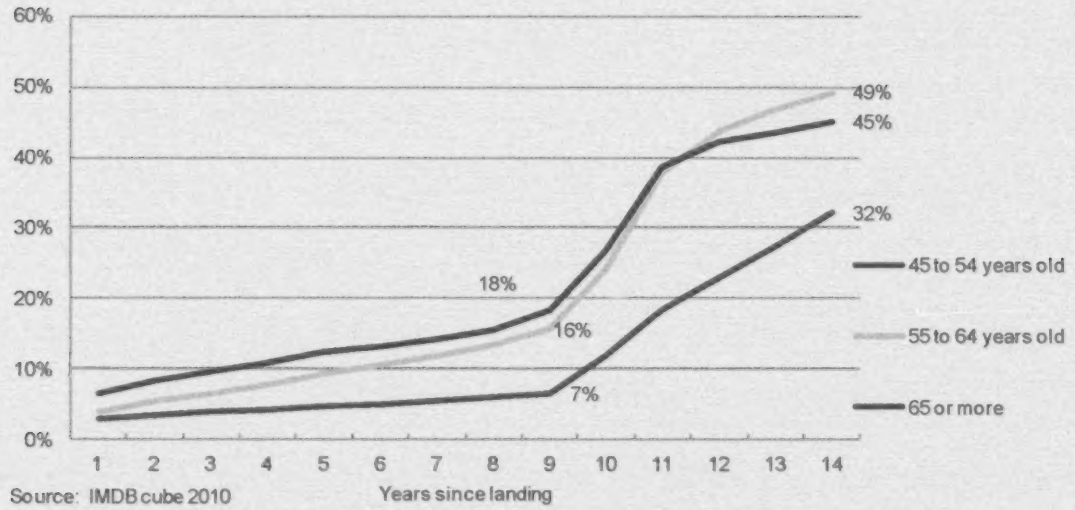
Figure 3-3: Percentage of SA, PGP, Landing years, 1996-2009



Source: IMDB cube 2010

The default rate is also higher the older the immigrant. For those PGPs who landed at age 55 and older, the default rate is double compared to PGPs who landed between the ages of 45 and 54 (see Figure 3-4). As well, PGPs who landed at age of 55 and older depended on SA for 36-41% of the cases after 10 years.

Figure 3-4: Share of PGP accessing SA by age groups



Source: IMDB cube 2010

Finding #23: The total undue costs to provinces are unknown as sponsorship debt is not tracked consistently across provinces. The undue costs of sponsorship default for BC and ON are a relatively small percentage of overall social assistance costs to the provinces and have been lower in recent years as fewer sponsors are in default and some of the costs are being recovered.

Costs of default to provinces

Provincial representatives interviewed for the evaluation felt that the primary direct cost of the FRP to provinces is in unpaid sponsorship default debt; however, only BC, AB and ON have MOUs related to recovery of sponsorship default. As a result, debt is not tracked consistently across provinces and limited data are available on the costs and value of social assistance received during the sponsorship period. Ontario and BC were able to provide some data on known costs[64] of sponsorship default.

In BC, the number of sponsored immigrants on social assistance during the period of undertaking has been steadily decreasing from 2009 (311 cases, on average, per month) to 2012 (206 cases). Sponsorship default as a proportion of all users of SA was 0.2%, on average, during this timeframe. The average annual cost to BC for sponsorship debt from 2009-2012 was $1.9 million. As a result of repayment of historical debt[65], the province receives more money in payments from sponsors every year (averaging about $3 million per year from 2009-2012) than it pays out in benefits to sponsored relatives during a period of undertaking. The total outstanding sponsorship debt has decreased in each of the four years; however, outstanding debt remains at $18.9 million.

[64] Family class immigrants must self-identify as a member of the FC on their social assistance application. If they do not do so, the province will not assess whether or not they are in a period of undertaking. Therefore, the undue costs reported by the provinces are only for those cases where an FC immigrant self-identified and were determined to be in a period of sponsorship undertaking.

[65] Historical debt refers to sponsorship debt that was incurred in years prior to the one in which they were re-paid.

In Ontario, the number of sponsored relatives on social assistance during a period of undertaking has also declined from 2007 (5,409 cases, on average per month) to 2012 (3,660 cases). Correspondingly, the average costs to the province have also decreased from $57.7 million in 2007 to $40.9 million in 2012. Sponsorship debt as a proportion of all users of SA in Ontario was 1%, on average, during this timeframe. The province has also been able to recover a portion of its sponsorship debt and collected an average of $4.2 million for fiscal years 2007-08 – 2011-12. In 2011 the recovery rate was 12%, the highest rate in all years for which data is available.

The IMDB was used to determine the number of sponsored immigrants in a period of undertaking who reported using SA in each province. Information on sponsored spouses and partners showed that the majority of those with sponsors in default lived in one of the provinces who had an information-sharing MOU with CIC. As Table 3-26 below shows, although the rates of default for PGP sponsors are relatively low in provinces that do not have an MOU, Manitoba has a growing number of PGPs claiming SA during the period of undertaking over time, and these are greater than the numbers in BC.

Table 3-26: Number of PGPs with less than 10 years since landing accessing social assistance benefits, taxation years 2006-2010*

Prov of Residence	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Ontario	5,605	4,570	4,395	4,220	3,830
British Columbia	375	275	240	210	170
Alberta	2,420	2,385	2,505	2,620	2,655
Province with MOU	**8,400**	**7,230**	**7,140**	**7,050**	**6,655**
Manitoba	55	30	580	495	630
Saskatchewan	5	--	5	5	10
Other provinces	25	70	20	40	35
Province without MOU	**85**	**100**	**605**	**540**	**675**
All provinces	**8,485**	**7,330**	**7,745**	**7,590**	**7,330**

Province of Quebec is excluded.

Source: IMDB cube 2010

3.6.4. Other benefits of family reunification

Finding #24: There are considerable social, cultural and other economic benefits of sponsorship to sponsor families.

Aside from the key benefit of Canadian citizens and permanent residents reuniting with their families, key informants reported other benefits of the Program, such as facilitating settlement and integration of sponsors and providing economic benefits to both the family and Canada. The sponsor survey was used to assess the actual nature and extent of social and cultural benefits of the FRP[66].

[66] In all cases, the percentages presented have excluded those respondents who said the question was "not applicable".

Provision of child care

Sponsors were asked how often their sponsored relative helps provide child care to their family. A large majority of respondents to the survey[67] (85%) said their parent or grandparent provided child care often or sometimes[68], which would provide a significant benefit to these families.

Volunteering in the community

According to the sponsor survey, 60% of S&P and 52% of PGPs volunteer in the community at least sometimes. Again, the figure for PGPs is much higher than what was represented by the LSIC data. The same two research studies cited above looked at the incidence of volunteering among PGPs. Both studies used LSIC data, and both reported the same finding: volunteering increases with length of time in Canada, with 14% of PGPs reporting that they volunteer in the community after being in Canada for two years. Again, the LSIC data provides information on immigrants who were not included in the scope of the evaluation.

Additional family income and other economic benefits

As noted earlier, key informants reported their belief that sponsored relatives can provide economic benefits to the family, with one such benefit being additional family income. Little documentary evidence exists regarding the economic contribution of sponsored relatives; however, the sponsor survey and focus groups both provide information on the incidence of increased family income. The survey found that:

- 66% of sponsors said their S&P contributes to household income often and an additional 14% said they contribute sometimes.
- 15% of sponsors said their PGP contributed to household income often and 21% said they contribute sometimes.
- The findings from the focus groups support these findings, with 52% of S&Ps who participated reporting that they were either working full or part-time and thus contributing to household income, and about 40% of PGPs reporting that they sometimes or often contributed to family income.

Sponsored relatives can also contribute indirectly to household income. For example:

- 40% of S&P sponsors said that having their sponsored relative in Canada helped them work more hours.
- 48% of PGP sponsors said that having their sponsored relative in Canada helped them work more hours.
- 34% of sponsors reported that having their PGP in Canada helped their spouse work additional hours.
- 26% of sponsors reported that having their PGP in Canada has helped them go to school/college/ university or take a training program.
- 44% of sponsors said having their PGP in Canada helped their spouse to go to school or take additional training.

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[67] Of those who felt the question was applicable (N = 228).

[68] The sponsor survey may over-represent those households where PGPs are more involved in these activities.

Sponsors were also asked if there were other ways their sponsored relative helps in their home. There was only one response mentioned frequently - household chores such as cooking and cleaning - mentioned by 24% of S&P sponsors and 29% of PGP sponsors.

Other social and cultural benefits

Several social and cultural benefits of immigration have been mentioned in the literature. For example, Vanderplaat et al (2009) note, "Not only is the family good for the well-being of the individual, it is good for society as a whole because access to family relationships and networks can support and mitigate the settlement and integration process."[69] Other benefits noted by Vanderplaat et al (2009) include:

- Social Cohesion: family support and reunification is seen in immigration research as a prima facie "good" - reuniting families has been recognized as essential for well-being and social adaptation in the receiving country.
- Stronger civic society: family members may help in the integration process by not only supporting their sponsors to integrate into the host society but by settling and becoming citizens themselves.
- Social dynamism, cultural richness, diversity and multiculturalism: Migrants can build intercultural bridges and cross-border social capital as they move between their culture of origin and that of their new home.

The sponsor survey and focus groups with sponsored relatives were able to provide some evidence regarding the extent to which sponsored relatives provided emotional support for the family and helped the sponsor's children learn about their cultural heritage.

Spouses and partners might be expected to impart their cultural heritage to their children, and would certainly be expected to provide emotional support to their family. The sponsor survey showed that over 95% provided emotional support often. As well, 92% helped their children learn about their cultural heritage often or sometimes. As well, many S&P sponsors (43%) gave their sponsored relative credit for helping them to settle in Canada. S&Ps in the focus groups described their lives as happy and settled and some also described their spouse/partner as being more settled in their career and personal life since their sponsored relative had come to Canada.

PGPs also made important contributions to their families once reunited in Canada. When there were children in the family, virtually all (92%) helped the grandchildren learn their cultural heritage often or sometimes. As well, almost all (97%) provided emotional support to their sponsoring family often or sometimes. Of PGP immigrants participating in the focus groups, all reported that they had provided emotional support to the sponsor and their family. As well, 39% of sponsors reported that having their PGP in Canada helped them to settle in Canada and 57% said it helped their spouse to settle in Canada.

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[69] *A Preliminary Investigation of the Contributions of Sponsored Parents and Grandparents in Canada.* Madine VanderPlaat, Howard Ramos, and Yoko Yoshida. 2009. Working Paper. Atlantic Metropolis Centre. Found online at: www.metropolis.net/pdfs/fow_vanderPlaat_ramos_yoshida_WP25.pdf

3.7. Program performance—Efficiency and economy

The following section examines the efficiency and economy of the FRP in terms of resource utilization within the Program (Program allocations and costs), the efficiency of the Program in terms of the extent to which new tools and initiatives have helped the Program to meet its objectives in a more efficient way and other issues that impact negatively on the efficiency of file processing, and alternative design or delivery approaches that might improve the Program's cost-effectiveness.

3.7.1. Resource utilization - Program budget and costs

Finding #25: FC Program costs are high when compared to economic programs but have generally decreased over the period of the evaluation.

Finding #26: Budget allocations for the Family Reunification Program will decrease over the next few years, while planned FC levels targets are growing and will include a higher proportion of PGP applications, which have been increasingly costly to process.

Program budget

CIC's 2011-12 Departmental Performance Report (DPR) provides expenditure information for Family and Discretionary Immigration using SAP data. The data shows that expenditures for that year[70] were $45.1M,[71] which represented approximately 4% of all CIC program spending.[72] To provide some context for this percentage, Permanent Economic Residents and Citizenship for Newcomers and All Canadians each represented 4% of all CIC spending as well.

CIC program costs

In addition to using SAP to manage Departmental finances, CIC has developed and implemented an activity-based costing model, the Cost Management Model (CMM), which uses time and volume data to develop total cost estimates for CIC's business lines. (For a more comprehensive explanation of the CMM, see Section 2.4.2).

As indicated in Table 3-27, CMM data was available for the FRP for the entire period under evaluation, with the exception of 2008-09. According to this table, most of CIC's FRP costs (approximately 90%) during the first three fiscal years of the evaluation period were expended on the S&P and Other FC streams, although this fell to just over 80% in 2011-12, likely reflecting a departmental emphasis on reducing the PGP inventory.

[70] Prior to 2011 (under the former PAA), CIC's financial information for the FRP was subsumed within the budget for Immigration programming as a whole; consequently, there is no expenditure data available from 2007-08 to 2010-11. Changes to the way CIC compiles financial data makes it difficult to assess historical trends related to the FRP budget.

[71] This amount includes the annual expenditures for H&C and Public Policy Considerations, which is a small component of the overall Program Activity budget.

[72] Total program expenditures for CIC in 2011-12were approximately $1.6B, almost half of which was spent on Settlement and Integration of Newcomers.

The total CIC costs for the FRP and those for S&Ps and Other Family Class have generally decreased over the five years under study, although this trend is most apparent in the last three years. The cost for the PGP stream, in contrast, has increased over the same time period.[73]

Table 3-27: Total CIC program costs[74]

	2006-07	2007-08	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
S&P, and Other FC[75]	52,418,967	51,353,716	52,668,213	45,566,196	42,258,950
PGP	5,844,529	6,642,859	6,973,625	7,043,008	8,420,400
Total CIC cost	**58,263,496**	**57,996,575**	**59,641,838**	**52,609,204**	**50,679,351**

Source: Cost Management Model (CMM).

The fact that Program costs have decreased over recent years cannot be understood independently of the number of applications processed each year; i.e., reduced costs may simply reflect reduced processing numbers. In order to assess this, the evaluation looked at the number of final decisions for each year and, using the data in Table 3-27, calculated the annual cost per application. This information is presented in Table 3-28.

As outlined in the table, the annual number of FCR decisions overall, and those for S&Ps and Other Family Class applications, have generally decreased over the five year period under study, while the numbers for PGPs have been fairly stable. This generally parallels the reduction in total annual costs. However, the unit costs show a somewhat different picture.[76]

[73] The CMM also has data on the costs incurred by various other government departments and agencies, including DFAIT, the IRB and CBSA. When these costs are added to CIC costs, the overall cost to the GOC more than doubles; e.g., the OGD costs for all FC in 2011-12 were $62,104,746 which, when added to CIC costs ($50,679,351) resulted in a total cost of $112,784,097.

[74] Note that the costs reported in this table are the total CIC costs only (In Canada and Overseas components). These costs include all categories of processes (i.e., program delivery, program delivery support and corporate services).

[75] These costs reflect the CMM reporting structure and include costs on all FC streams with the exception of the PGP category.

[76] The cost per application (i.e. unit cost) is calculated by dividing the total CIC cost (in a given fiscal year), from CMM financial data, by the number of final family class application decisions made in that fiscal year (i.e., cases approved, denied, withdrawn), which is taken from OPMB data.

Table 3-28: Cost per application – S&P and other FC and PGPs

	2006-07	2007-08	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
S&P and Other FC					
Number of final decisions	55,642	56,268	54,020	51,550	49,728
S&P and Other FC total cost	52,418,967	51,353,716	52,668,213	45,566,196	42,258,950
CIC cost per S&P & Other FC application	**$942**	**$913**	**$975**	**$884**	**$850**
PGPs					
Number of final decisions	10,048	9,699	10,272	9,383	10,741
PGP total cost	5,844,529	6,642,859	6,973,625	7,043,008	8,420,400
CIC cost per PGP application	**$582**	**$685**	**$679**	**$751**	**$784**
All FC					
Number of final decisions	65,690	65,967	64,292	60,933	60,469
FCR total cost	58,263,496	57,996,575	59,641,838	52,609,204	50,679,351
CIC cost per FCR application	**$887**	**$879**	**$928**	**$863**	**$838**

Source: OPMB (final decisions) and CMM (costs)

The annual cost per application, for all FC and for S&Ps and Other FC, has gradually decreased over the last five years, with the exception of a spike in cost in 2009-10. In contrast, the unit cost to CIC to process a PGP application grew almost continuously over the same period, from $582 in 2006-07, to $784 in 2011-12.

In order to better understand the scale of this unit cost for FRP, it was compared to the costs for FSWP and PNP applications. Table 3-29 presents this comparison. In contrast to Table 3-28, which looks only at CIC costs, this calculation includes the costs to OGDs, so the unit cost for FRP is higher than presented previously.[77]

As shown in this table, Family Class applications have a 75% higher unit processing cost than either federal skilled worker or provincial nominee applications. Although the FC applications are more expensive to process, they comprise a smaller portion of the overall Immigration Program than economic immigration programs. This is aligned with the annual expenditures for FRP in 2011/12, which, at 4% of CIC's total budget, was the same as that for Economic Programs. (See Program Budget)

[77] The average unit cost to the Government of Canada (i.e., CIC and all OGD costs) was based on data from 2006/07 to 2011-12. Because there was no CMM data for 2008-09, the average cost was based on five years of data; the average number of final decisions used the numbers from all six years.

Table 3-29: Cost per application for immigration programs application processing

Immigration Program	Average # of final decisions per year (2006-07 to 2011-12)	Average total GoC costs per year (2006-07 to 2011-12)[78]	Average Unit Cost ($/application)[79]
Federal Skilled Worker Program	81,143	$87.36M	$1,077
Provincial Nominee Program	11,997	$12.94M	$1,079
Family Reunification Program	64,036	$120.60M	$1,883

Source: CIC Data, CMM

Revenues

In assessing the overall budget and costs of the FRP, it should also be noted that CIC charges sponsors and applicants a range of fees, which are meant to offset the administrative costs associated with processing their application. Table 3-30 presents the total annual revenues generated by the Program between 2006-07 and 2011-12. Given that the total number of FC applications received has generally decreased since 2008, (see Table 1-4), it is not surprising that annual revenues have also declined over the same period. However, the revenues generated from these fees decreased more steeply than the costs to deliver the FRP. Between 2006-07 and 2011-12, Table 3-27 shows that CIC's overall Program costs fell by 13% (from approximately $58 million to $51 million), whereas Table 3-30 demonstrates that application revenues decreased by 33%.

Table 3-30: CIC revenue under the Family class, financial years 2006-07 to 2011-12

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Total revenue	$53,569,009	$53,492,727	$41,034,996	$39,851,000	$34,445,715	$36,079,168

Source: CIC Finance

Future budget allocations

While changes to the PAA didn't allow for a review of historical trend data, the Departmental Reports on Planning and Programming (RPPs) were used to determine the budget allocations for Family and Discretionary Immigration between 2012-13 and 2015-16. As indicated in Table 3-31, the planned FRP budget for 2012-13 is $53M, but will decrease to $38M by 2015-16. This represents a reduction of approximately 28% in allocated budget and 8% in FTEs (from 433 to 400).

[78] The average GoC cost is calculated using available CMM data, which covers 2006-07 to 2011-12, but excludes 2008-09 where CMM data is not available. Therefore, the average GoC cost per year is an average of 5 year's worth of data.

[79] Average unit GoC costs were calculated by dividing the average yearly cost of the program (over a 5 year period) by the average number of final decisions made in a year over that same period (see also footnote 74).

Table 3-31: Yearly budget allocations (past and planned) for Program activity 2.1 – Family and discretionary immigration, 2011-12 to 2015-16

2012-13*		2013-14*		2014-15*		2015-16*	
Planned Spending	FTEs	Planned Spending	FTEs	Planned Spending	FTEs	Planned Spending	FTEs
$53 M	433	$42.4 M	435	$39 M	418	$38 M	400

*Note: Figures for 2012-13 are taken from that year's respective RPP, whereas budget amounts for future years 2013-14 to 2015-15 are taken from the most current 2013-14 RPP.

At the same time that the FRP budget is decreasing, the Department plans to land more family members, particularly within the PGP streams. Table 1-5 shows that the planned FC levels range has increased since 2010. For the most recent 2013 levels plan, the range has been set to 63,800-73,500 permanent resident landings - up from 58,500–65,500 in 2011.

3.7.2. Program efficiency

In the previous section, the evaluation presented the costs associated with the Family Reunification Program and an analysis of any cost savings that were generated over the period of the evaluation. An additional element of Program efficiency is in application processing and whether this can be accomplished more quickly with the same resources, thus creating savings for the department. A variety of new tools and initiatives were implemented during the period of the evaluation that had the potential to improve the efficiency of the FRP. Although many of them had been in place for only a short time, the evaluation attempted to ascertain whether they had contributed towards this goal. While looking at efficiencies in application processing, issues were also identified that negatively impact the ability of CIC staff to process applications in a timely way.

New tools and initiatives

Finding #27: New program tools and initiatives have been received positively by CIC staff, for the most part, and are expected to lead to greater program efficiencies; however, there is not yet sufficient evidence to demonstrate this impact.

Over the past several years, CIC has undertaken department-wide modernization efforts, which have sought to update, streamline, and consolidate many of the business tools, processes, facilities, and procedures across business lines so as to improve efficiency in program delivery.

Interviewees were asked whether there had been any changes (new tools/initiatives) to the Program and whether these had improved program efficiency. In terms of new tools, the largest number of interviewees felt that GCMS has increased program efficiency by improving CIC's workload management, facilitating centralization, and allowing for better capture of information. Despite these positive observations, a few interviewees noted that the initial transition to GCMS was extremely difficult and resulted, during early implementation, in a decrease in productivity and efficiency, as a lot of time was spent on understanding and navigating the new system. A few others went on to state that GCMS holds a lot of potential to facilitate processing and is expected to lead to greater program efficiency.

Interviewees also cited the risk-tiering of files through CPPO, which most believed has led to greater efficiency and consistency. Other positive changes mentioned by informants included: the movement towards e-medicals and using 2D barcodes on application forms, which was felt to have improved client service and led to faster and more cost-effective processing; the continuing pause on PGP applications, which was felt to have helped with efforts to draw down the PGP inventory; and the new Super Visa Program, which a few informants felt has been helpful in meeting client needs during the PGP pause.

Evidence drawn from the CVOA survey also supports the generally positive view towards new program tools and initiatives (see Table 3-32). Visa offices were asked to estimate the impact on efficiency of some major processing changes that have taken place in the Family Reunification Program in recent years. CVOA respondents were asked to rate the following program changes in terms of their impact on program efficiency (from very helpful to negative impact): PGP pause; one-step application processing of PGPs; risk triaging; CPC file creation; completeness checks at CPCs; e-medicals; and GCMS. All seven examples of changes listed in the survey were received positively by the majority of visa offices, with no fewer than 69% saying each change was at least slightly helpful.

Table 3-32: CVOA ratings of new program tools and initiatives

Survey question: What has been the impact on efficiency in your visa office for each of the following changes?

New changes/initiatives	Very helpful	Moderately helpful	Slightly helpful	No impact	Negative impact	N
New electronic medicals	71%	13%	8%	4%	4%	24
File creation at CPCs	61%	16%	23%	0%	0%	31
Completeness check at CPCs	47%	13%	20%	10%	10%	30
One-step application process for FC4	37%	15%	22%	26%	0%	27
GMCS	31%	28%	22%	9%	9%	32
Risk triaging -- low-risk FC4 cases processed in Canada	28%	17%	21%	24%	10%	29
Pause in FC4 application intake	20%	20%	27%	27%	7%	30

Source: CVOA survey

Despite these positive perceptions from informants and visa offices, a review of administrative data showed that processing times for S&P applications increased from 2011 to 2012 (an increase of 1 month for positive decisions and 4 months for negative decisions) following the implementation of some of these new tools. Processing of negative decisions on PGP files also increased by 4 months, between 2011 and 2012 (see Table 3-33). There was, however, a slight decrease in the time taken to process a positive PGP decision, going from 58 months in 2011 to 57 months in 2012.[80] Indeed, this evaluation has noted (3.2.2) that in a frequently changing operational environment, officers are required to operate under new procedures and learn to use new tools. The adoption of these changes (i.e. GCMS) has meant challenges in the early stages of adoption (3.4).

[80] Although the Super Visa is not intended to replace the PGP Program, it does provide a means by which PGPs can spend time with their family in Canada, and they are processed relatively quickly. Between December 2011 and November 2012, approximately 13,000 supervisas were issued, with an average processing time of 83 days.

Further analysis of efficiencies generated by new tools and initiatives was attempted as part of the evaluation. However, because so many initiatives were implemented over a short time frame with no independent data tracking systems, it was concluded that there is currently insufficient evidence overall to show any impact the new tools and initiatives may have had on program efficiency.

Negative impacts on program efficiency

Finding #28: Complex files and negative decisions take longer to process, and the Program had a higher number of these types of files over the period of the evaluation, compared to the previous five-year period.

When asked about the costs of the Program, complex cases were mentioned by key informants as being the most costly; in particular, those that result in a negative decision, and appealed cases or those involving litigation, as these files are more resource intensive[81] and add a substantial amount of time to application processing.

Table 3-33 substantiates this claim and shows that FC files which resulted in a negative decision between 2001 and 2011 took, on average, 4 months longer to process than those that resulted in a positive decision. As well, data from the IAD indicates that an appeal can add an average of 6 to 14 months to application processing times.

As earlier depicted in Table 3-14, the FC refusal rate was higher during the period of the evaluation than in the previous 5-year period - the proportion of refusals on FC files was between 16% and 18% from 2007-2011 but between 13%-15% for the previous five-year period.

[81] Files that result in a negative decision generally take longer to process as time is added for planning and conducting interviews with clients, field visits and conducting document verifications. As a result of these additional tasks, these files are also more resource intensive.

Table 3-33: Average processing time (in months) of sponsorship application by decision type and immigration category, final decision years 2002-2011

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Time avg./ total # (02-11)	2012
Spouses and Partners	13	12	11	10	10	10	10	10	11	12	11	13
Children and others	14	14	13	12	13	12	12	13	14	15	13	15
Parents and Grandparents	17	21	26	36	40	42	45	48	51	58	38	57
Overall positive application	**14**	**14**	**13**	**15**	**15**	**15**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**21**	**16**	**27**
Number of positive final decisions	**42,681**	**52,613**	**45,036**	**51,207**	**50,652**	**49,685**	**49,741**	**48,521**	**45,879**	**42,929**	**478,944**	**54,595**
Spouses and Partners	15	16	15	14	13	13	15	15	16	16	15	20
Children and others	19	20	21	22	20	20	23	24	22	25	22	26
Parents and Grandparents	21	27	34	41	44	50	52	59	56	62	44	68
Overall negative application	**17**	**18**	**18**	**18**	**19**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**24**	**20**	**29**
Number of negative final decisions	**6,459**	**7,413**	**6,931**	**7,055**	**7,598**	**8,582**	**7,887**	**7,318**	**7,570**	**6,975**	**73,788**	**7,559**
Number of positive/ negative final decisions	**49,140**	**60,026**	**51,967**	**58,262**	**58,250**	**58,267**	**57,628**	**55,839**	**53,449**	**49,904**	**552,732**	**62,154**

Source: OPMB data file, OPS 2012-2280, 2013-02-07

Finding #29: While almost half of cases streamed through Alternate Dispute Resolution are resolved, the remainder continue to a full appeal hearing, which may affect the efficiency of file processing by lengthening overall processing times for these cases.

Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) is an informal mechanism which aims to empower parties to an immigration appeal to participate in the resolution of their case through the use of a negotiation process prior to undertaking a full appeal hearing. The principal ADR method of attempting to resolve appeals is through mediation sessions which are meant to resolve cases quickly, efficiently, and fairly. Prior to the ADR and/or appeal hearing, appealed cases are pre-screened and streamed into ADR by staff at the IAD based on complexity and the balance of existing or new evidence that is likely to resolve the case quickly during the negotiation process. At ADR, an IAD-employed dispute resolution officer (DRO) acts as mediator and attempts to resolve the appeal. ADR cases may be resolved by the sponsor withdrawing their appeal or by the Minister's counsel (CBSA officer acting on behalf of CIC) consenting to it. Alternatively, in unsuccessful mediations, one of the objectives of the ADR is to reduce the evidence and legal issues required at a possible future hearing.

The administrative data showed that between 2007 and 2011, about 50% of all FC appeals were streamed into the ADR process. Table 3-34 shows that of all cases going to ADR between 2007 and 2011, on average 45% were resolved, but the majority (55%) went on to a full IAD hearing. In the most recent 2012 ADR statistics, this figure is even lower, at only 42% of all ADR cases being resolved. Therefore, the ADR process actually results in additional time added to the appeal process since a majority of appealed FC cases still go on to a full hearing.

Table 3-34: ADR resolutions

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Appeals Allowed	908	976	903	754	614	450
Appeals Withdrawn	136	333	247	204	215	156
Appeals Abandoned	15	5	--	5	5	--
Resolved in ADR	1,059	1,314	1,152	963	834	610
Unresolved in ADR	1,167	1,271	1,477	1,220	1,039	838
Total ADR	**2,226**	**2,585**	**2,629**	**2,183**	**1,873**	**1,448**
Resolution rate	**47.6%**	**50.8%**	**43.8%**	**44.1%**	**44.5%**	**42.1%**

Source: IAD data

Documentary evidence also seems to support this finding. In 2002, the IAD conducted an evaluation of the ADR Process which showed that unresolved ADR cases that went to a full hearing took on average 4.8 months (in Toronto) and 2.4 months (in Vancouver) longer than cases that were never streamed into ADR.[82]

3.7.3. Alternative design/delivery approaches

The evaluation included a documentary review of other sponsorship programs from immigrant receiving countries similar to Canada (i.e., Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the USA) in order to assess whether other nations have found ways to deliver their family reunification programs more cost effectively. The review showed that most mechanisms to save costs that were identified by other countries focussed on how to limit costs once the sponsored relative had landed. For example, it was found that most other countries reviewed do not allow for the sponsorship of grandparents, which are believed to be the most costly of sponsored family members due to their higher health care needs and lower labour market participation, resulting primarily from their older average age at landing. Sponsorship of parents and grandparents is not a part of Family Reunification Programs in Australia, the USA, and New Zealand. In the United Kingdom, parents and grandparents may be sponsored, but only if they can show that they require long term care from their sponsor and cannot obtain that care in their country of residence. In these cases, the sponsor must sign a 5-year undertaking to care for their relative and pay any social assistance costs.

Several other immigrant receiving countries also limit access of sponsored relatives to social services or provide incentives to applicants so that they do not rely on social services. For example, in Australia, parent sponsorships are split into two sub categories: non-contributory parents and contributory-parents. Contributory parents are those who pay a higher visa application fee as a contribution to health and welfare costs and, in return, receive significantly shorter processing times and higher availability of immigration spots. Likewise, Australian sponsors of overseas parents and "other relatives" must pay a large financial bond (upwards of

[82] An Evaluation of the ADR Program of the Immigration Appeal Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board Final Report, by Leslie Macleod - Executive Summary March 2002.

$10,000 AUD), which is held for a period of 10 years, as part of their Assurance of Support (equivalent to the undertaking). In the United States, all sponsors must sign an Affidavit of Support (an undertaking) which obligates sponsors to financially support their family members until the family member becomes a U.S. citizen, or can be credited with 40 quarters of work (usually 10 years).

Public consultations held by CIC in 2012[83] found varying levels of support for different cost-saving measures similar in nature to the ones that exist in other countries. These consultations asked informants about their views on potential changes to the FRP such as:

- Implementing a cap on certain types of more costly applications/applicants (e.g., PGPs).
- Increasing the length of time for which Minimum Necessary Income must be met.
- A fee or tax charged to PGPs or their sponsors to offset some of the anticipated costs to provincial and federal programs.
- Increasing the length of undertaking for certain types of sponsorships (e.g., PGPs).

Participants did not endorse the idea of fees being imposed on either applicants or their sponsors, though they did support the necessity of sponsors demonstrating income stability. Participants commented on the potential cost of parents and grandparents to Canada's social programs, and expressed concern about admitting numbers of people that would exceed Canada's financial capability to support them. Moreover, there was support for limiting sponsorship of parents and grandparents to those who had obtained Canadian citizenship, and those who's PGPs have the majority of their children living in Canada.

[83] Summary Report: Stakeholder and Public Consultations on a Redesigned Parent and Grandparent Immigration Program, 2012. Found online at: www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/consultations/parent-program/index.asp

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation evidence presented in this report supports the following conclusions and recommendations.

4.1. Relevance

There is a continuing need for the Family Reunification Program and the role of the federal government in its delivery is appropriate. The FRP is well aligned with CIC priorities and is a key pillar of the Government of Canada's approach to immigration.

CIC continues to receive significant numbers of applications from Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor their eligible family members under all three categories of the Family Class (spouses and partners, parents and grandparents, and other FC) demonstrating continuing demand and ongoing relevance for the Family Reunification Program. Key informant interviews and public consultations showed that the strongest perceived need exists for the FC Priority categories, which includes spouse and partners, and dependent children. The role of the federal government in the delivery of the FRP is appropriate.

The Family Reunification Program is well-aligned with CIC priorities and, while the Government of Canada has more recently emphasized the economic benefits that derive from immigration, the Family Reunification Program remains a key pillar of Canada's approach to immigration.

4.2. Program performance

The FRP has been successful at reuniting families and there are considerable benefits to sponsor families resulting from this reunification.

The sponsor survey showed that almost all sponsored relatives lived with their sponsor in the same home upon landing and a large majority were still living with their sponsor after five years in Canada. The FRP has been successful at reuniting families as they continue to live in close geographic proximity as a family unit.

There are significant benefits which sponsored family members may contribute to their sponsor, their families and to Canada. Survey results showed that a large majority of S&Ps and some PGPs contribute to household income both directly, through working full or part-time themselves, and indirectly by enabling their sponsor to work additional hours. Sponsored S&Ps and PGPs also volunteer in the community and provide other social and cultural benefits by helping children learn about their cultural heritage, providing emotional support for their family and by enabling their sponsor to settle in Canada. Most PGPs also benefit the sponsor family through the provision of child care.

Although it is not an economic immigration program, Family Class immigrants have positive economic outcomes, with the exception of parents and grandparents whose economic outcomes are below the all immigrant average.

The Family Reunification Program is not designed to produce economic benefits but it is expected to limit undue costs to the general public. That said, spouses and partners are faring quite well economically, with close to 7 in 10 reporting employment earnings in each of their first 8 years in Canada, and compare favourably to spouses of economic immigrants. Immigrants in the Other FC category also show positive economic outcomes considering their young average

age. Economic outcomes of PGPs, however, are below the average of all immigrants, with fewer than half reporting employment income, low average earnings, and increased EI usage over time.

While there are some undue costs related to the use of social assistance, this can also be attributed primarily to PGPs. There is evidence to demonstrate that the sponsorship undertaking has a containment effect on the use of SA by PGPs, and that the total amount of sponsorship debt has decreased in recent years.

The PGP population is largely responsible for the disproportionately high rate of FC immigrants reporting social assistance as compared to all immigrants, and reliance on social assistance is more common among PGPs the older the age at landing. However, the undertaking that is signed by PGP sponsors was shown to have an important containment effect on the use of social assistance by PGPs, with reliance on social assistance spiking following the termination of the undertaking.

A comparison of the period of the evaluation (2007-2011) with the previous five-year period (2002-2006) demonstrated a reduction in the total costs associated with sponsorship default. More recently selected immigrants are less likely to rely on social assistance than their counterparts who landed in earlier years. This finding, together with the active enforcement and debt recovery programs implemented in some provinces, has resulted in a reduction in the total amount of unpaid sponsorship debt over the last few years.

Decision-making in the FRP appears to be consistent and defensible, and is supported through training, tools, functional guidance and quality assurance on FRP files. However, given the many recent and on-going changes to Program processes, it is important to ensure that this program management support continues to be timely and up-to-date.

According to key stakeholders and the results of a network-wide QA exercise, decisions made on Family Class applications are defensible (i.e., well documented) and generally consistent between different officers. Despite this, improvements could be made through additional quality assurance exercises and further standardization of procedures and training. Specific issues with training and functional guidance were identified to further improve the consistency and defensibility of decision-making.

Recommendation #1: In light of many recent and anticipated changes to the Program, CIC should standardize a training schedule, including refresher training and more formalized GCMS training for those involved in application processing, including CBSA hearings officers.

Program clients, overall, have a good understanding of sponsorship requirements and the application process. However, clients also identified a need for information on the ongoing status of their application.

Information services provided to clients (e.g., application forms, guidance documents, etc.) are clear and helpful and as a result, sponsors and principal applicants generally have a good understanding of application procedures and requirements. Some clients may face continuing difficulty with the complexity and language level of application and information packages. Though information is available in a variety of formats on application processes and requirements prior to filing an application, there is a gap in client-identified information available to FC clients who have already applied and wish to have up-to-date and detailed information about the ongoing status of their submitted application.

Management of the Program is effective and responsive, although issues were identified with regard to communication and coordination primarily between visa offices and inland offices, and between CIC and external partners. A lack of performance information related to program integrity is also an issue for ongoing management of the Program.

The effectiveness of communications varies across the CIC network and between Program partners. Improvements to communication and collaboration between overseas and inland offices, such as identifying a designated contact person and enhancing the timeliness of responses to inquiries, are needed. Communication between CIC and CBSA is hindered by lack on an integrated computer system and different departmental priorities. As well, visa officers would benefit from a better understanding of the appeal process at the IAD, including the types of information that are used in their decision-making process. Better coordination and communication with provinces and territories is also needed in terms of delivering the adoptions program, which was identified as being especially complex given its multi-jurisdictional nature.

A further issue compounding communication and coordination efforts is the fact that roles and responsibilities are not always clear between various CIC offices, and between CIC and CBSA. These issues may be amplified by the lack of dedicated governance mechanisms for the Program.

In light of the many Program changes that have taken place in recent years:

Recommendation #2: CIC should clarify, consolidate and communicate the roles and responsibilities of the various offices that have a role in the delivery of the FRP.

Recommendation #3: CIC should develop a strategy to improve communication and coordination between different offices across the CIC network and with external partners in order to share Program information effectively.

There were a number of limitations identified in the availability of FRP data. For example, there is no centralized data captured by CIC on the incidence of suspected fraud, or active and standardized tracking of the types of fraud seen across the CIC Network. Data on appeals at the IAD and on judicial reviews of FC cases at the Federal Court are not sufficiently comprehensive to inform the Program's operation. As well, CBSA data shared with CIC does not capture FRP-specific information. FRP policies and procedures were found to be evidence-based to the extent that information is available, however, necessary information is lacking in some key areas related to fraud within the FRP, among others. As well, the full extent of undue costs to provinces is unknown, given that sponsorship debt is not tracked consistently across provinces (particularly among those without an information-sharing agreement with CIC). These examples taken together highlight a gap in performance measurement data.

Recommendation #4: CIC should develop and implement a performance measurement strategy (PMS) for the FRP and generate the data needed to assess program integrity. This should include discussions with partner agencies, departments and provincial/territorial governments to ensure necessary Program data is captured for use in ongoing program performance measurement, monitoring and reporting. The PMS should also include a plan to monitor the impact of CIC's Modernization initiatives (e.g., workload distribution, processing efficiency), in alignment with CIC's Modernization performance measurement and evaluation frameworks.

The FRP, like all CIC programs, strives to maximize both efficiency and program integrity. The fact that planned budget allocations for the FRP are decreasing, while planned admissions for FC are increasing may challenge CIC's ability to deliver the Program within current processing standards while also addressing program integrity issues.

The service standards for FCP processing are not being met and the processing times for all FC categories increased over the period of the evaluation although it is expected that new tools and initiatives implemented in the FRP will eventually help increase the efficiency of program delivery, however, these positive effects will require time to assess. Operational data shows that the most recent processing times on FC files in 2012 have actually increased from processing times in 2011, the year when many new Program changes occurred. This may be explained by the fact that processing files to a negative decision requires more time and additional resources, and there were a higher proportion of negative decisions processed during the period of the evaluation compared to the previous five-year period.

A common perception exists among CIC staff in Canada and overseas, as well as among Program partners, that fraud and program misuse are high in the FRP, particularly in the S&P category. There are currently a variety of program integrity measures which are used effectively by visa officers; however, these measures require additional resources and time, and therefore may impact negatively on the cost or timeliness of file processing. Key CIC informants reported that a lack of resources is the primary barrier to identifying fraudulent FC cases. Some informants feel that CIC may not be identifying some instances of fraud in the Program and over 70% of visa offices held that the trade-off between the efficiency of file processing and program integrity is problematic for FC processing in their office at least to some extent.

In terms of resource utilization, the department currently has plans to decrease the budget allocation for the FRP and to increase FC levels targets over the next few years. In order to reduce the PGP backlog, a higher number of PGP applications will need to be processed in the coming years. The unit cost to process these applications has increased annually since 2006-07. These factors, i.e., an increasing workload and decreasing resources, together with concerns regarding program integrity and the inability of CIC to meet its current processing time service standards, create a challenging situation and an opportunity for CIC to realign its resources and FRP commitments.

Recommendation #5: CIC should conduct a risk-based assessment of pressures currently facing the FRP opportunities for process streamlining and re-engineering in order to determine how resources can best be aligned to achieve the program's objectives and priorities, including ensuring program integrity, reducing backlogs and meeting established service standards.

Appendix A: Family Reunification Program - evaluation matrix

Question	Indicators	Sources/methods
Program relevance		
1. Is there a continued need for a Family Reunification Program (FRP) in Canada? For the spouses and partners and dependent children component (S&P)? For the parents and grandparents component (PGP)?	• Continued demand for reunification (trends re # of applicants) • Perceptions of key stakeholders on the need for each of the FRP components • Perceptions of sponsors and relatives on the need for FRP • Public support for family reunification	• Document review (POR reports, levels consultations, etc.) • Data analysis (RDM, OPMB) • Interviews (CIC, immigration representatives) • CVOA survey • Survey of sponsors • Focus groups with sponsored relatives (local CICs & CVOA site visits)
2. Is the federal government role in the delivery of the Family Reunification Program appropriate?	• Alignment with legislative and international commitments • Perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the federal role • Evidence of alternative options to current delivery	• Document review (IRPA & regulations, int'l conventions/declarations/agreements, etc.) • Interviews (CIC, provinces)
3. Is the Family Reunification Program aligned with CIC and Government of Canada priorities?	• Alignment with departmental and federal priorities • Perceptions of key stakeholders regarding alignment with priorities	• Document review (legislation, Throne speeches, Ministerial announcements & speeches, policy documents, etc.) • Interviews (CIC)
Program Performance - Management Outcomes		
4. Is the management of the Program effective and responsive to the changing operational environment?	• Policies and procedures are evidence-based and legally defensible • Governance structure well articulated and operates as intended • Roles and responsibilities are clear • Communication and coordination mechanisms are in place (within CIC and with external stakeholders) and function well • Program management decisions address current conditions/ context • Trends re movement of workload between CVOAs • Perceptions of key stakeholders on design and delivery issues impacting success of the Program	• Document review (program docs, including committee mandates & minutes, directives, etc.) • Interviews (CIC, DLSU, CBSA, RCMP/CSIS, provinces) • Case studies (local CICs, CPCs, CVOAs)

Question	Indicators	Sources/methods
Program Performance - Program Outcomes		
5. To what extent do Program clients understand the sponsorship requirements and application process?	• Clear, accurate timely information is available to sponsors and applicants in a variety of formats • Clients access this information • Trends in completeness of applications over time • Perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the level of knowledge of clients • Perceptions of sponsors and sponsored relatives as to whether requirements and process are clear	• Document review (application kits & promotional materials, website, press releases, etc.) • Data analysis (web analytics, distribution #s, Call Centre stats, CPC stats, GCMS) • Interviews (CIC, CBSA, IAD, immigration consultants) • Survey of sponsors • Focus groups with sponsored relatives
6. Are application decisions timely, consistent and defensible?	Timely • Trends in processing time for sponsor and PR applications (steps in process & final decision/visa issuance) ▪ Proportion of applications processed within service standards ▪ Evidence of contextual issues that impact timeliness • Program employs systematic monitoring and quality control activities for application processing and decisions Consistent • Extent, timeliness and quality of training and guidance documents, communications and field support • Perceptions of staff regarding the availability and utility of support provided Defensible • Leaves denied/leaves granted for judicial review • Results of challenges/appeals/judicial reviews • Decisions are well documented and consistent with regulations and requirements • Perceptions of key stakeholder re timeliness, consistency & transparency of decisions	• Document review (monitoring & QA process documents & reports) • Data analysis (GCMS, OPMB stats, CPC & CVOA stats) • Interviews (CIC, CBSA, IAD, immigration representatives) • Case studies (local CICs, CPCs, CVOAs)
7. How effective are the program integrity measures currently in place?	• Trends in nature and extent of misuse & fraud over time ▪ # of cases referred to CBSA for investigation, # of investigations & # of removal orders & removals ▪ Evidence of serial spousal sponsoring ▪ Number of sponsors barred from sponsoring • Trends in refusals - #s and reasons for refusal - over time	• Document review (academic research) • Data analysis (RDM, OPMB, GCMS, IMDB, CPC & CVOA stats) • Interviews (CIC, CBSA, RCMP/CSIS, IAD) • Case studies (local CICs, CPCs, CVOAs)

Question	Indicators	Sources/methods
	• Evidence of suspected default, misuse &/or fraud ▪ Success factors, gaps & barriers to verification of fraud • Stakeholder perceptions re current measures & possible improvements • Evidence of alternative measures	• CVOA Survey
8. To what extent are eligible families being reunited in Canada?	• Number of landings for FRP • Trends re geographic location of family members in Canada ▪ #/% who live with sponsors at arrival and after 1, 3 and 5 years (esp. spouses & dependants) ▪ #/% who arrive in province/territory of sponsor ▪ #/% who are living in province/territory of sponsor after 1, 3 and 5 years • Evidence of onward migration (e.g., no tax return for 2 years) • Survey and focus group respondents indicate they are living with/near family members • Number of Super Visas issued to PGPs	• Data analysis (OPMB, IMDB) • Survey of sponsors • Focus groups with sponsored relatives
9. Are there undue costs to the general public as a result of the Program?	• Default rates and costs (extent of reliance on social assistance during the prescribed sponsorship period) ▪ Incidence & value of social assistance claims	• Data analysis (IMDB, provinces) • Interviews (CIC, provinces)
10. What social, cultural or other benefits result from family reunification?	• Percent of PGPs providing child care for the family • Rates of volunteerism among sponsored relatives • Economic outcomes of sponsored relatives (employment, SA, EI, OAS/GIS) • Additional household family income resulting from a sponsorship • Evidence of other social and cultural benefits • Perceptions of key stakeholders	• Document review (academic research) • Data analysis (OPMB, GCMS, IMDB, CPC stats) • Interviews (CIC, immigration representatives) • Survey of sponsors • Focus groups with sponsored relatives
Program Performance - Efficiency and Economy		
11. What is the cost of the Program? Are there alternative, more cost-effective approaches to achieve the intended results?	• Budgeted and actual costs - by component (Hinton litigation) • Cost per application processed • Costs/resources of other stakeholders • Perceptions of CIC and other stakeholders • Costs of health care for PGPs, social assistance, etc. ▪ Number declared inadmissible for medical reasons who are admitted on appeal	• Document review (financial data, CPC documents, international literature, Hinton litigation, etc.) • Data analysis (Cost-Management Model, provinces) • Interviews (CIC, CBSA, RCMP/CSIS, provinces)

Question	Indicators	Sources/methods
	• Review/comparison of alternative design/delivery approaches and best practices (e.g. Australia, UK, NZ, USA)	• Case studies (CPCs) • CVOA survey
12. Have the new tools and initiatives (e.g., one-step submission, pause on PGP applications, GCMS) improved the efficiency of the Program?	• Trends in processing times/inventory • Perceptions of CIC and other stakeholders	• Data analysis (OPMB, CPC stats) • Interviews (CIC, CBSA, immigration consultants) • Case studies (CPCs & CVOAs) • CVOA survey